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THE CHINESE FAMILY SAGA NOVEL: A LITERARY SOCIOLOGY

by

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Doctor of Philosophy

Comparative Literature

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ABSTRACT

This study has two purposes: how the family is portrayed in the family saga novels published in Mainland China during the twentieth century and whether literary texts can be taken as an indispensible information source to fill up the gaps left by the "code-like sequence" (Hart 104) or numerical data in sociology.

The samples are grouped into three chapters: the family saga novels in the Republican period, in Mao's era and in the 1980s-1990s - for analytical purposes and based on the hypothesis that correspondence exists between aesthetic conventions inscribed in the literary text and the legislating and hegemonic forces in that society, and that the literary text should be first of all read "as constituted within historically specific literary institutions" (Makaryk 126). Each chapter begins with a brief introduction of the historical background of the novels under discussion and proceeds to the analysis of each sample novel. Discussions are made in light of statistics, documents and other sociological data with the intention to find whether the information provided by the saga novels on the behavior of families and society generally corresponds to the statistical data circulating in the field of sociology. The conclusion is that the Chinese family saga novel, as a literary genre, has thematically and stylistically changed during the twentieth century, in tune with the changes in social forms and literary aesthetics; the intention to take the Chinese family saga novels as an indispensible information source for sociology turns out to be questionable, due to the observation that many acute social problems, concerning the family and its interaction with society, including interpersonal relationships, are not mentioned

in many novels published in the 1980s-1990s, when the authors purposefully avoid sensitive topics or choose to play literary games in an age filled with conflicting and plural ideologies and paradigms. In the same way, social statistics might be misleading in that they are subject to available techniques or purposeful falsifications. Therefore, literature and sociology might be complementary to each other, but depending on when and how. Literature is only a reconstruction of certain moments but never a coherent totality.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCP – the Chinese Communist Party

CNP – the Chinese Nationalist Party

FRIJAFS - *Family Relations Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*

GPCR – the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

HH - Household

HRS - the household responsibility system

JMF - *The Journal of Marriage and the Family*

PRC – the People's Republic of China

TVE - township and village enterprise

INTRODUCTION

Why This Research

This research is done out of a deep concern for the earliest and probably the most complicated institution in human history - the family. Although different interpretations have been made about the origin, definition and function of the family, no agreement has been reached; although centuries have passed witnessing the transformation of different societies, the family still exists, challenging changes in society. However, families do have changes. The composition and activities of a contemporary family are different from those of a nineteenth century family, and the functions or emotional pattern of a German family may never occur in a Chinese family. Then what determines the dynamics between the family and society and between the family's individuality and universality? One can hardly deny the claim that family is the first institution into which an individual is exposed and through which an individual is socialized. Then how is this institution structured and in what way are its nurturing and socializing functions carried out within different familial and social contexts?

When in 1981 the first professional organization on marriage and family research in China, the China Marriage and Family Research Association, was founded, the National Council on Family Relations in the United States had already been in existence for 34 years. Its two scholarly journals, *The Journal of Marriage and the Family* (JMF) and *Family Relations Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies* (FRIJAFS), separately started in 1941 and 1951, had been

playing a leading role in family studies with famous contributors from all over the world. Creative theories and inspiring research methods, originated from a full range of social sciences and making use of the quantitative, qualitative, and/or multi-method designs, had made family studies in the West a well-developed subject, in sharp contrast with family studies in China. When in 1980 Thomas B. Holman and Wesley R. Burr published their article "Beyond the Beyond: The Growth of Family Theories in the 1970s" in JMF, China was on its inauguration of scholarly research in the field of the family and marriage; it was not until the late 1980s that a couple of worthwhile books on the Chinese family and marriage were published, but most of them were just based on the documentary retrieval or ratiocination of already known facts; there is little evidence of analysis and formulation of theories. Although in recent years more empirical research has been done on parent-child relations, family tensions caused by urbanization, and women's status and income inequalities, more multi-perspective and cross-disciplinary studies are needed and perplexing the Chinese scholars of family studies today.

Tamara K. Hareven once mentioned that for those contemporary American historians who wanted "to re-introduce human experience into historical research and to emphasize the complexity of historical change" (Hareven 95), the great challenge was "the reconstruction of a multi-tiered reality – the lives of individual families and their interactions with major social, economic, and political forces" (95). Based on a summary of a Conference-Workshop on "Family and Kinship in Chinese History" held in January 1983 at Asilomar, California, Patricia Ebrey also

mentioned the use of unofficial sources, "including epitaphs, brief biographies of exemplary individuals, fictional stories, and books of advice" in the study of Chinese family history (Ebrey 382); she revealed an academic tendency or, rather, a limitation that "the historical study of lineages and kin groups in China was considerably more advanced than the study of the household and family life" (381). This problem was already discussed by James Watson in 1982 in his "Chinese Kinship Reconsidered: Anthropological Perspectives on Historical Research" published in *The China Quarterly*. The gist of this article lay in the exposure of the limitation of the anthropological methods in family studies and in the suggestion of cooperation between anthropologists and sinologists (Watson 689). In 1987, Robert P. Weller's *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion* was published. In it, Weller did not take cultural forms as possessing of a given meaning, thus falling into the cliché of structuralism; instead, meaning, to him, was created by the "actors", which entailed a constant work, constrained by the social relations, in which the "actors" were embedded, constantly producing interpretations and reinterpretations (Weller 37-59). Whether other theorists agreed or not with Weller's suggestion of taking "ideology" and "pragmatics" as the two polarized points of one dimension, along which styles of interpretation varied, the merit of his theory lay in the assumption of the interactive relationship between the hegemonic and legitimizing functions of the dominant ideology and the actor's interpretations, which could never be sufficiently proved by statistics or official documents upon which the sociological or anthropological research had been heavily relying on. In order to show how industrialization, urbanization,

political movements, or wars had affected familial behaviors "from macroscopic issues of institutional changes in structure and function to microscopic propositions about coalition formation in family groups of varied sizes and sex composition" (Hill 10), the perspective of processual interplay between family behaviors and the composite forces influencing the formation of those behaviors should be introduced into the social scientific scenario to fulfill the "missing information" that "social data" often fail to contain (Liao 126); for example, how the family life cycle had been embodied in daily lives, what notions, goals, and values of certain historical periods had resulted in the pattern observed, and how the family, as an intermediate unit between the individual and society, negotiated externally with a more superior power and internally with interpersonal conflicts. Literature, with its "thick descriptions" (Geertz 3), concerning the most elementary aspects of life and emotion, might be an irreplaceable source for the study of social forms and their activities. By taking the author as the "actor", negotiating between his or her autonomy and the coercive external forces, a new perspective might be obtained on literature as a political protocol with historical references.

The family saga novel is not a new genre in Chinese literary history. *Golden Lotus* [Jin ping mei 金瓶梅] written in the Ming Dynasty was commonly taken as the first Chinese family saga novel, though *A Dream of Red Mansions* [Honglou meng 红楼梦] published in the eighteenth century in the Qing Dynasty was more evaluated as the masterpiece of this genre (Li, "Birth" 1; Liang, "Classification" 200; Wang, "Saga Novels" 25). In the twentieth century, more family saga novels

were written. However, most of the studies of these novels had followed the tradition established in literary criticism: characters and plots were thematically as well as stylistically analyzed. Even though some comparative reviews were made among American, British and Chinese family saga novels (Deng and Pan; Liu and Zhu; Qiu, "Difference"; Wang, "Distinguished"), the research pattern was still literary or synchronic, and, therefore, could not properly reveal the process of how the Chinese family saga novel as a literary genre had changed and how its social correlatives had been working on its content and representations. Reuben Hill once said that "the family part of family theory…refers to the family phenomenon in all of its manifestations in behavior, overt or covert, associational or institutional, interactional or ideological" (Hill 10). A process-focused and interdisciplinary dimension, therefore, should be introduced into both the study of the family in sociology and the family saga novels in literature, whose relationship was already exposed by Louis Mink as early as in 1978 in his following statement, "the significance of past occurrences is understandable only as they are locatable in the ensemble of interrelationships that can be grasped only in the construction of narrative form" (Mink 148).

If the family saga novel has been identified as the focus of this research, the next question is - "What is a family saga novel"? In the Chinese literary field, there remains a debate as to how to define the family saga novel and what is the proper way to translate it into English. Xu Zuhua, a contemporary Chinese scholar engaged in the study of family saga novels, adopted three different English terms to translate the same Chinese term "*jiazuxiaoshu*" 家族小说 in his three different

reviews - "family fiction" ("Artistic"), "family novel" ("Historical"; "From"), and "saga novel" ("Saga); similar attempts were also made by Li Yongdong in his three reviews, in which "family stories" ("Formula"), "saga novel" ("Consciousness"), and "clan novel" ("Key") were used to refer to the same Chinese term "*jiazuxiaoshuo*" (Note: In the Bibliography, I faithfully copied the English translations of the titles of Xu's articles as well as those of Li Yongdong's as the way they were published in the Chinese journals). This phenomenon unearthed not only a problem of translation, but also the subtle differences in how the family saga novel is defined as a literary genre. First of all, the Chinese phrase "*xiaoshuo*" may, literally, mean three different genres: "novel", "novella" and "short story". So, to catch the spirit of "*xiaoshuo*" in translation, further contextual information needs to be factored to specify whether it is a family saga novel, a family saga novella, or a family saga story – if the family saga does not specifically refer to the genre of novel, as defined by Mary Ellen Jones, whose views and some relevant discussions will be further explored in the next section. Based on such specifications, Xu's and Li's translations revealed another problem: were their categorizations of "family fiction", "family novel", "saga novel", "clan novel" and "family stories" intended to capture the same group of literary works? This problem not only concerns genre, translation, or for that matter, the professionalization of literary criticism in China, but also the urgency of where this research should start.

The Family Saga Novel

Jesse L. Byock once wrote that family sagas "are not heroic epics, folktales, chronicles, or romances but plausible vernacular tales about often real people who lived in Iceland in the period from the settlement in the 980s until about 1030" (Byock 153). Mody C. Boatright evidently disagreed with Byock in this regard. He entitled his paper *The Family Saga as a Form of Folklore* which was about how several families settled down and developed in Texas in the United States; however, at the same time he admitted that when he used the term "family saga", he was in hesitance, because that paper "was not concerned with the heroic poems of Ireland or Iceland or the North European continent, dealing with battles and trials of strength and complex genealogies of heroes" (Boatright 1). Boatright's hesitance revealed at least two implications: 1) the family saga as a literary genre had changed and 2) there existed a tension between the inheritance and development of literary genres, as time advanced and social textures changed; this change does not only have an effect on the content and style of the genres, but also, as pointed out by Alvin B. Kernan, on "their relations to each other and their place in the general system of culture, as do religion, philosophy or science" (31). John Jakes, who was called the "godfather of the historical novel" (Jones 3), defined his *The Kent Family Chronicles* and *The North and South Trilogy* as "historical family saga", whose one of the functions, according to him, was to help "alleviate anxieties about the present" through "searching the past for values and continuity" (qtd. in Jones 25). Based on a close examination of Jakes' thirteen major novels, especially his definition of "historical family saga," Mary Allen

Jones concluded that "novels must cover more than a generation to be classified as family sagas. As a result, the historical element is strong. While not all historical novels are family sagas, the family saga is, almost inevitably, a historical novel" (25). As if to further reinforce this point of view, Jakes himself argued that since the primary goal of his historical family saga was to evoke a bygone era, "research is imperative: to set up story lines, to decorate the stage and clothe the characters, to give texture to the scene" (qtd. in Jones 25). These generic features of his historical family saga were further specified in his interview with Meredith Allard. To Allard's question "why do you think family sagas are so compatible with historical fiction", John Jakes answered that "both family history and a larger historical experience happen over a long span of time, hence, using a family story as a vehicle, the writer has perfect justification for moving through a complete historical era" (Jakes para. 9); when asked, "Your novels have been praised for their historical accuracy…how do you incorporate historical facts with your fictional characters and plot?" (para. 10), Jakes further explained that "if the [historical] period is largely unfamiliar, I begin by reading good secondary sources. From these spring ideas for characters, as well as aspects of the period that strikes me as good background for the story…with areas of concentration in mind, I dig into more specific sources, including biographies, letters, diaries, etc., relating to the subject" (para. 11). In their discussions, the interrelationship between "family sagas", "historical accuracy", and the author's justification of "moving through a complete historical era" through "using a family story as a vehicle" is illuminated, through which the family saga obtains its

aesthetic and thematic sublimation: it is more than a family story.

In the history of Chinese literature, "*jiazuxiaoshuo*" 家族小说 as a proper noun indicating a literary genre was a recent phenomenon, though the literary genre being referred to by this term had been in existence since the birth of *Golden Lotus*, which was overtly claimed as the first family saga novel in Chinese history by Li Yucheng in his article "The Birth of the Chinese Family Saga Novel [Zhongguo jiazu xiaoshuo de fasheng 中国家族小说的发生]. As to who was the first person to use this term to indicate a literary genre, more research needs to be done; but its definition was obviously a hot topic in the 1980s and the discussion on its definition had lasted to the early 21st century. This phenomenon might be associated with the introduction of the term "family saga" in the 1980s from the Western literature, whose recognition of this term started as early as the coinage of the Icelandic Saga, with the family saga as one of its earlist themes, which was about how the aristocratic Norwegian immigrants, the first settlers of Iceland, had founded a society even more aristocratic than the one they left behind (Koht 34). Generally speaking, three approaches toward the definition of "*jiazuxiaoshuo*" in the Chinese context were identified: 1) "*jiazuxiaoshuo*" should thematically be grand and at least one family clan was the focus of the narration. As the representative of this school, Shao Xudong proposed that "'*jiazuxiaoshuo*' should tell the story of at least more than two generations or even more; it concerns several members of the same generation and the relationship between a couple of families" (Shao "Exotic" 23); 2) any fictions that focused on the description of familial lives could generally be categorized as "*jiazuxiaoshuo*"; for example,

Liang Xiaoping once discussed that "all fictions that take marriages, the family, and the family clan as the axle around which human relationships, emotions and patriotic actions are woven can be counted as '*jiazuxiaoshuo*'" (Liang "Classification" 14); and 3) any fictions that were engaged in the issue of traditional familial cultures were "*jiazuxiaoshuo*" which even included Lu Xun's *The Madman's Diary* [Kuangren Riji 狂人日记] and Zhang Ailing's *The Golden Cangue* [Jinsuo Ji 金锁记] (Liu, "Male" 151; Wu, "Transformation" 91; Xu, "From" 110).

Based on a brief review of what a family saga is and how its content and composition have been changed due to the changes in social forms, and in light of Byock's assumption that the Icelandic sagas could only be "more readily understood in light of the Iceland's social forms than through comparisons with European traditions" (Byock 154), the Chinese family saga novel in this dissertation is defined as follows: it specifically refers to a type of novel, chronicling the lives and doings of a family or a number of related and interconnected families over a period of time; more than one generation is portrayed and structural changes happen to this family, or related families, as the result of big social events or transformations. Rather than depicting familial life, the intention of the narration is to use literature as a medium to reflect the author's interpretation of how the actions of household, individuals, state, and social movements relate to and condition each other, so that an inter-constitutive relationship between literature and history/society is formed. With daily life as its focus and the development of the protagonists as the main thread against the

backdrop of a series of factual historical events, the family saga novel functions as an effective medium for the understanding of the family as a self-verifying social organization and a cooperative element situated in a bigger economic and political institution. What Wang Anyi once confessed on how she wrote *Reality and Fiction* [Jishi he xugou 纪实和虚构] can also be roughly applied to the structuring of a family saga novel: "I fabricate my family history and use it as the vertical axle of my human relationships… [and] I fabricate my community and use it as the horizontal axle of my social relationships" (Wang, "*Reality*" 321); at the centre of this vertical-crossing-horizontal fabrication is the autonomic self of the author, who weaves up a story based on facts or historical events but connects them with fictional plots and characters in a way that transcends the limitations inherent of an official historiography or pure imagination. As a result, the family saga novel might obtain its allegorical justifications in both the writer's and the reader's interpretations of history or national issues.

Review of Previous Studies

In the past, many critics regarded Golden Lotus as the beginning of literary creation and written by one person, rather than an adaptation from other stories or official chronicles. However, this concept was constantly challenged by scholars of "kaozheng pai" 考证派 (textual verification school); for example, Zhu Xing's *The Textual Verification of Golden Lotus* [Jin ping mei kaozheng 《金瓶梅》考证] maintained that the author of Golden Lotus was not Xiao Xiaosheng, as popularly believed, but Wang Shizhen; however, this theory was already

challenged by Wu Han in 1934 in his "The Age of the Author of Golden Lotus and Its Social Background" [Jin ping mei de zhuzhe shidai ji qi shehe beijing《金瓶梅》的著者时代及其社会背景]; Xu Suofang's "A Re-discussion on Golden Lotus" [Zai lun jin ping mei 再论《金瓶梅》] and Chen Liao's "A Re-discussion on Whether Golden Lotus Is An Adaptation from Yangzhou Oral Tales" [Jin ping mei yuan shi pinghua zailun"《金瓶梅》原是评话再论] overtly pointed out that *Golden Lotus* was no more than an adaptation like its predecessors, Romance *of the Three Kingdoms* [Sanguozhi yanyi 三国志演绎] and *The Water Margin* [Shuihu zhuan 水浒传], which had "retained unmistakable signs of the storyteller's tale out of which it developed" (Hightower 120). Although novels adapted from the storytellers' tales were "usually diffuse, episodic, and without unity of conception" (120), *Golden Lotus* was evaluated by James Robert Hightower as "qualitatively the equal of the European novel" (120).

Golden Lotus was written in vernacular rather than colloquial or literary language and focused on ordinary people's daily lives, with a lot of descriptions of erotic scenes, domestic activities, power struggles and entangled emotional conflicts, concerning the tensions between men and women, love and lust, and the external and the internal.

There are disagreements regarding who authored *Golden Lotus*, when it was written, and how many versions it has. Among the many versions, these three have often come with high recommendations: *New Notes and Comments on Golden Lotus* [Xinke jin ping mei cihua 新刻金瓶梅词话], *The New Tapestry*

Portrait of Golden Lotus [Xinke xiuxiang pipin jin ping mei 新刻绣像批评金瓶梅], and *Gao Hetang's Commentary on the First Remarkable Book Golden Lotus* [Gao Hetang piping di yi qishu jin ping mei 皋鹤堂批评第一奇书金瓶梅]. In each version, there were generally "pixu" 批序 (commentary preface), "tici" 题词 (dedication), "dufa" 读法 (reading methods), "wenda" 问答 (questions and answers), "tushuo" 图说 (illustrative diagrams), and "lunzan" 论赞 (comments and evaluations); and in each chapter there are usually "meipi" 眉批 (head notes), "weipi" 尾批 (end notes), "jiapi" 夹批 (interlinear notes), "pangpi" 旁批 (side/marginal notes), and "quandian" 圈点 (highlighting marks). Zhang Zhupo's *Gao Hetang's Commentary on the First Remarkable Book Golden Lotus*, written around 1695 and with the introductory chapter "Reading Methods to the Most Remarkable Novel *Golden Lotus*", was not the first but the most influential one. Zhang Zhupo not only proposed 108 ways of reading Golden Lotus, but also made detailed notations, explanations, comments, reflective thoughts, and judgments on the novel's contents, writing techniques, social effects, and readers' responses. He highly regarded *Golden Lotus* as a breakthrough in the history of Chinese novels due to its literary expertise in dealing with interpersonal relationships, setting up suspensions, and characterizing languages in accordance with the intended images and personalities.

Later generations either work on Zhang's notes and comments or continue the studies of the details in different versions. A brief search shows that thousands of books, adaptations, dictionaries, critiques and reviews have been written based

on *Golden Lotus* since its first appearance, and it is nearly impossible to run a brief list of them here. In broad strokes, the following works are worth mentioning: He Xiangjiu's *Golden Lotus and Chinese Culture* [Jin ping mei yu zhongguo wenhua 《金瓶梅》与中国文化], *The Parody of Golden Lotus* [Xishuo jin ping mei 戏说《金瓶梅》] and *The Propagation History of Golden Lotus* [Jin ping mei chuanbo shi 《金瓶梅》传播史]; Wu Gan's *Zhang Zhupo and the Studies of Golden Lotus* [Zhang Zhupo yu jin ping mei yanjiu 张竹坡与《金瓶梅》研究] and *Annals of Zhang Zhupo, the Commentator of Golden Lotus* [Jin ping mei dianpingjia Zhang Zhupo nianpu《金瓶梅》点评家张竹坡年谱]; Huang Lin's *Talks on Golden Lotus* [Jin ping mei manhua《金瓶梅》漫话], *Research Materials on Golden Lotus* [Jin ping mei yanjiu ziliao《金瓶梅》研究资料] and *The Textual Verification of Golden Lotus* [Jin ping mei kaozheng《金瓶梅》考证]; Hou Zhongyi and Wang Rumei's *Collection of Data on Golden Lotus* [Jin ping mei ziliao huibian《金瓶梅》资料汇编]; Wu Hong and Hu Bangwei's *The Ideologies and Artistic Features of Golden Lotus* [Jin ping mei de sixiang yu yishu《金瓶梅》的思想与艺术]; furthermore, Wang Rumei's, Liu Hui's, Chen Changheng's, Cai Guoliang's, and Sun Xin's series of papers on *Golden Lotus* are all worthwhile to read.

After *A Dream of Red Mansions* was published, criticism on it immediately became a fashion; famous scholars either commented on it or made references to it. Zhi Yanzhai's *Zhi Yanzhai's Re-evaluation of A Dream of Red Mansions* [Zhi Yanzhai chongping shitou ji 脂砚斋重评《石头记》] written in 1754 was the

earliest and most reputable criticism on *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Most of the later critiques and reviews were based on the information provided in this book. Wang Guowei's *Commentaries on A Dream of Red Mansions* [Honglou meng pinglun《红楼梦》评论] published in 1904 was the first to use western philosophy and literary theories to discuss the value of *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Wang pointed out that the previous studies of *A Dream of Red Mansions* tended to focus on its textual verification while ignore its aesthetic significance. Wang Guowei's attention was not to the analysis of familial life, or power struggle, or eroticism which formed a large proportion of this novel; instead, he emphasized its subliminal spiritual world. He postulated that *A Dream of Red Mansions* had revealed the truth of life and the dynamics between suffering and relief. Later important scholars who were highly credited with critiques of *A Dream of Red Mansions* are Yu Pingbo, Hu Shi, Zhou Ruchang, He Qifang, Hu Shichang and Feng Qiyong. Based on the statistics provided in *A Bibliography of the Versions of A Dream of Red Mansions* [Honglou meng shulu 红楼梦书录] published in 1963, more than nine hundred and seventy versions or adaptations of *A Dream of Red Mansions* had been published from its first appearance to 1954. In 1979, the Institute for the Studies of *A Dream of Red Mansions* was established, and "Hongxue" 红学 (Redology) became a distinguished school. Besides Zhi Yanzhai's and Wang Guowei's commentaries mentioned above, a few more are recommendable: Cai Yuanpei's *The Connotations in A Dream of Red Mansions* [Shitou ji suoyin《石头记》索隐] (1916); Hu Shi's *The Textual Verification of A Dream of Red Mansions* [Honglou meng kaozheng 《红楼梦》考证] (1922),

Wang Kunlun's *Discussions on the Characters in A Dream of Red Mansions* [Honglou meng renwu lun《红楼梦》人物论] (1948), Yu Pingbo's *Research on A Dream of Red Mansions* [Honglou meng yanjiu《红楼梦》研究] (1952), Zhou Ruchang's *New Verifications of A Dream of Red Mansions* [Homglou meng xin zheng《红楼梦》新证] (1953), He Qifang's *On A Dream of Red Mansions* [Lun honglou meng 论《红楼梦》] (1956), Wu Shichang's *Exploration of the Origins of Dream of the Red Chamber* published in 1961 by Oxford University Press, Feng Qiyong and Li Xifan's *Dictionary of A Dream of Red Mansions* [Honglou meng da cidian《红楼梦》大辞典] (1988), and Lu Qixiang's *Anthology of Rare Materials on A Dream of Red Mansions* [Honglou meng yanjiu xijian ziliao huibian 《红楼梦》研究稀见资料汇编] (2001).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, literature took on a new light. The author's historical and political consciousness was increasingly embodied in the literary works. This was attributable to the prevalence of eroticism emerging in both fictions and society in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, when sexual art became a rather "noble" pursuit by intellectuals and officials; people got indulged in sensuality and sentimental fictions, and they no longer had lofty inspirations (Liang, "On" 352). Even in the early Republican period, "xiexia xiaoshuo" 狎邪小说 (pornographic fiction) and "yuanyang hudie pai xiaoshuo" 鸳鸯蝴蝶派小说 (Mandarin Duck and Butterfly fiction) were still popular entertainments for many a reader. Perry Link associated their popularity with the transformation of mass printing techniques, the spread of vernacular literature, the

improvement of literacy among urban residents, and an overwhelming ambivalence toward the introduction of modern lifestyles and mores (Link, "Mandarin" 39). Link also emphasized the role of mass publishing houses that emerged around 1900, which, according to him, created a modern newspaper industry that incorporated increasingly diverse subject matters into literary works, demonstrating the tension between the new and the old or the Western and the Chinese (41-45). However, all these reasons seemed to pale in kindling a strong nationalism and the call for moralization before the alert that the nation would be subjugated by foreign aggressions, militarily as well as economically.

As early as in 1902, Liang Qichao called for a "New Fiction", and for the first time in Chinese history he associated the function of fictions with the salvation of a nation and a people:

> In order to make a new start for our nation, we should have a new fiction; in order to acquire a new morality, we should have a new fiction; in order to establish a new religion, we should have a new fiction; in order to practice a new politics, we should have a new fiction…Why? It is because fiction has an unbelievable power on molding people's mind and behavior. (Liang, "On" 349)

Liang Qichao's manifesto was followed by the reformers and elites in the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement who regarded the family as the root of feudalism, illiteracy as the cause of the nation's weakness, and women as

the most exploited group. These elites began their campaigns of anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism, enlightening the masses and liberating women. Ba Jin's *Family* [Jia 家] was written against this background, and so were Mao Dun's *Midnight* [Ziye 子夜], Lao She's *The Yellow Storm* [Sishi tongtang 四世同堂], and Lu Ling's *The Moneybag's Sons and Daughters* [Caizhu di ernümen 财主底儿女们]. Together with Zhang Henshui's *A Distinguished Family* [Jinfen shijia 金粉世家], which was published earlier than Family, this group of family saga novels was generally credited with realistic descriptions of life, emotion and society; they committed themselves to the exposure of social problems and the advocacy of humanity and nationalism (Cao, "Collapse"; Chow, "Fateful"; Liu, "Ba Jin"; Munro; Qiu, "Difference"; Yin; Vohra). Ba Jin once said that "*Family* is a realistic novel. The characters in it were once loved or hated by me. I witnessed or experienced many of the scenes described in it. Without my first nineteen years of life, I could never have been able to write this novel" (Ba, "Postscript" 123); Lao She proclaimed that "I once lived in those compounds inhabited by many households, and that is why I could depict them; I could realistically portray rickshaw pullers because many of my friends were rickshaw pullers before" (Lao, "How" 123); Mao Dun also postulated that "the writing process of *Midnight* is a good lesson for me [...] if you want to write about workers and masses you have to live among them; otherwise, no matter how good your second-hand material is, you cannot produce convincing images, real to life" (Mao, "Preface" 95). Against this background, most of the critiques on this group of family saga novels were focused on their realistic instinct, such as how the characters were created based

on their prototypes in real life and why the author's personal experience was decisive in the formulation of themes and aesthetics. In my eyes, *A Distinguished Family* was more dominated by a pessimistic outlook on the collapse of a long established imperial system and the uncertainty of one's fate in the turmoil of social transformations; Ba Jin's *Family* and Lao She's *The Yellow Storm* were more controlled by an optimistic ideology that the feudal society would eventually be replaced by a more advanced one and that the Communist revolution would win in the end; and Mao Dun's *Midnight* and Lu Ling's *The Moneybag's Sons and Daughters* were more sentimentalized by a kind of tragic heroism resulting from the helpless struggles in front of successive wars, social corruptions, poverty, death, and the deterioration of human nature.

As the left-wing instinct became more dominant, the Soviet socialist realism was gradually taken as the norm for proletarian literature. Its legitimization was finalized by Mao's "Talk at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" [Zai Yan'an wenyi zuotanhui shang de jianghua 在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话] delivered in 1942. In order to quickly construct a socialist country and consolidate his proletarian dictatorship, Mao Zedong also emphasized the importance of revolutionary romanticism, because propaganda was important and heroic images were needed in both the New Democracy Revolution and socialist construction. In such political and historical context, the following saga novels were written in the 1950s: *Sanliwan* [Sanliwan 三里湾] (Zhao Shuli, 1955), *The Builder* [Chuanye shi 创业史] (Liu Qing, 1957), *Keep the Red Flag Flying* [Hongqi pu 红旗谱] (Liang Bin, 1957), *Changes in the Past Sixty Years* [Liushi nian de bianqian 六十

年的变迁] (Li Liuru, 1957), and *Three-Family Lane* [Sanjia xiang 三家巷] (Ouyang Shan, 1959). If the family saga novels written in the Republican period could be basically regarded as diverse in literary aesthetics and the authors' personal value systems, this group of family saga novels largely adhered to the doctrines of Mao's ideology. They were more like the advocacy of Mao's political purposes. Mao's aesthetic inclinations became the standard and obligation for every person working in the fields of literature and art. Characters were constructed and stereotyped in accordance with Mao's social class theories and the plot lines could only be revolved around the heroic deeds achieved under the leadership of Mao Zedong and his Communist Party in the new democracy revolution and socialist construction. Consequently, "monotonousness" was the most frequently used term by later literary critics to describe the literature of this period to show how unified the literary creation was in a totalitarian environment (Chung and Falchikov; Hsu, "Literature", "Chinese"; Huang, "Heroes", "*Villains*"; Huang and Yu; Lin, "*Demystifying*"; U, "*Leninist*").

When Mao's era ended and Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Open-up policy started, the family saga novel as a literary genre suddenly flourished and demonstrated an unprecedented variety in both content and writing techniques: *The Funeral of Muslims* [Musilin de zangli 穆斯林的葬礼] (Huo Da, 1987), *The Ancient Ship* [Gu chuan 古船] (Zhang Wei, 1986), *Family Clan* [Jiazu 家族] (Zhang Wei, 1994), *Old Address* [Jiu zhi 旧址] (Li Rui, 1992), *White-Deer Plain* [Bailuo yuan 白鹿原] (Chen Zhongshi, 1993), *Reality and Fiction* [Jishi he xugou

纪实和虚构] (Wang Anyi, 1993), *Rice* [Mi 米] (Su Tong, 1991), *My Life as Emperor* [Wode diwang shengya 我的帝王生涯] (Su Tong, 1992), *Enemy* [Diren 敌人] (Gen Fei, 1991), *Cries in the Drizzle* [Zai xiyu zhong huhuan 在细雨中呼唤] (Yu Hua, 1991), *To Live* [Huozhe 活着] (Yu Hua, 1992), *Red Poppies* [Chen'ai luoding 尘埃落定] (Alai, 1992), *Red Sorghum: A Family Saga* [Honggaoliang jiazu 红高粱家族] (Mo Yan, 1987), *Big Breasts & Wide Hips* [Fengru feitun 丰乳肥臀] (Mo Yan, 1995), *Caisangzi* [Caisangzi 采桑子] (Ye Guangqin, 1999), and *The Twentieth Act* [Di ershi mu 第二十幕] (Zhou Daxin, 1999). These novels started off with new tactics and attitudes in Chinese literary history: they either proved themselves as a destructive force or challenge to the traditionally established norms and standards or took a de-centralized political stand and a multifaceted literary aesthetic, and were filled with juxtapositions of conflicts and compromises (Callahan; Goldblatt; Liu and Tang; U, "*Disorganizing*"; Wu and Xu; Yao, "Elite"; Zhang, "*Post-socialism*"). The extended family was still the narrative setting but no longer had its realistic referent in real life – given that the one-child family policy had been strictly enforced since the late 1970s, that housing problem became increasingly serious in urban areas, that the size of the family became smaller, and that most families had only one child. Due to the observed gap between what had been described in the family saga novels and what was actually undergoing in reality, the allegorical implication of a fictionalized history became a welcome topic for many family saga critics, who adopted the overlapping but differentiating western theories into

the discussion of Chinese literature. New historicism and post-modernism were the most frequently used terms to discuss the linguistic or artistic features associated with this group of family saga novels (Lu, "Disappearance"; Yee, "*New*"). Subjectivity represented by the first person narrative style was noticed by many critics. In Alai's *Red Poppies*, "I," the narrator, a pseudo idiot and the second son of a Tibetan chieftain, had witnessed the ebb and flow of the Tibetan societies. Through the introduction of an exotic culture and the enigma of "nothingness", this novel had irritated readers' imagination and curiosity (Baranovitch; Buchanan; Yue; Crossette; Kakutani); "I", a female writer in Wang Anyi's *Reality and Fiction,* was portrayed as the offspring of a great heroic clan but lost in the perplexity of "who am I?" so that a search for the meaning of writing and human existence went through the whole novel (Gao, "Aspiration"; Hao, "Constant"; Tang); Mo Yan's "I" in *Red Sorghum: A Family Saga* and *Big Breasts & Wide Hips* was a multi-faceted narrator, shuttling back and forth on the timeline or in and out of the story, switching the roles of a narrator, a protagonist, a commentator, and the author as well, "capturing the meaning of the extrinsic violence that social history imposes upon the nation itself" (Yang, "Republic" 8). The questioning of and the searching for the meaning of life, literature and history, by means of "indeterminacy, fragmentation, de-canonization, selflessness, irony, [and] hybridization" (qtd. in Rose 213), in the family saga novels published in the 1980s-1990s revealed a new literary tendency and the complexity of human existence, which was no less fictional than a fiction was.

Method

This research was inspired by Robert Morrison MacIver's cultural theory that the pattern of every historical situation and process is determined by culture, the instrumental systems that sustain that culture, and the interaction between the biological and environmental factors (MacIver 36-37); it was also facilitated by Karl Marx's and Max Weber's stratification theories which associate inequality or differentiation of class and power with the possession of resources and the negotiation between superordinates and subordinates; and, last but not least, it was motivated by new historicist assumptions that literature, with its interest in "thick descriptions", "anecdotes, discontinuity and ruptures, eclecticism, heterogeneity, and de-centered authority (Geertz 3; Kaes 154), helps relive the lost or hidden "scenes" behind the "code-like sequence" (Hart 104) or missing in the extant narratives of history or official records. With the aid of all these theories and stimulated by the result of a brief survey on the previous studies on the Chinese family saga novels, the following research questions were formulated: were there any rules governing the portrayal of the family in the Chinese family saga novels written and published in the twentieth century – if both the author and the literary works were taken as one part of a power relationship? Could the family saga novels, with their process-focused "thick descriptions," be taken as a reliable and indispensible information source to fill up the gaps left by the "code-like sequence" or numerical data in sociology? What might be the link between literature and sociology as far as the family study is concerned?

This research has paid special attention to both the role of historical context

in which specific family saga novels were created and the role of literary rhetoric in mediating history. In order to offset the deficiency pointed out by Kiernan Ryan with respect to New Historicism – "its reluctance to meet the complex demands of a text's diction and formal requirement" (Ryan XVIII), close reading and thematic and stylistic analyses were done to each of the selected novels with the intention of uncovering how the content might reflect the texture of *that* age and what dominant writing techniques had been adopted in each work to facilitate the construction of a unified motif and the realization of the author's intention.

Samples for this research were taken only from the Chinese family saga novels published and widely recognized in Mainland China during the twentieth century. Those written by Taiwan, Hong Kong, and overseas Chinese writers were excluded for fear that different social systems might produce different ideologies and social activities, so that bias might occur if the baseline for comparison was chosen improperly. While attention was given to specific novels and details, other forms of literature, such as political works, government documents, pamphlets, slogans, letters, and decrees, were examined against each other and in connection with the themes and aesthetics adopted in the family saga novels in order to achieve the combination of literary and non-literary or empirical approaches so that the inter-textual relationship between literature and history was formed.

The whole dissertation is composed of five chapters. The first chapter is "Introduction", which tells the reader the motivation for this research, the questions the research hopes to answer, a brief review of previous studies to justify the necessity of this research, and the method in which this research is

done. The following three chapters are devoted to the discussion and analysis of the sample novels, separately entitled as "The Family Saga Novels in the Republican Period", "The Family Saga Novels in Mao's Era" and "The Family Saga Novels in the 1980s-1990s". This categorization is based on the hypothesis that correspondence exists between aesthetic conventions inscribed in the literary text and the legislating and hegemonic forces forming the conventions in that society, and that the literary text should be, first of all, read "as constituted within historically specific literary institutions" (Makaryk 126). Due to the fact that family saga novels were written and published in a great amount and in an accelerated speed in the 1980s-1990s, the novels chosen for the first and second categories are basically the ones available and fitting into the sampling criteria; for example, Lin Yutang's *The Moment in Peking* [Jinghua yanyun 京华烟云] and Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* [Dadi 大地], although famous and set in China, with Chinese families as the focus of description, are not included; the novels for the third category are basically assumed as representative of different aesthetics and schools - though the standard for the classification of aesthetics and schools might be arbitrary or subjective due to the fact that "our analyses and our understandings necessarily proceed from our own historically, socially and institutionally shaped vantage points" (Montrose, "Professing" 23). The last chapter is "Discussions and Conclusion", in which summaries are made based on the information provided in the previous chapters and further researches are proposed due to the limitations of this research and to carry this research interest further based on the work of this research.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FAMILY SAGA NOVELS IN THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD

1.1 Historical Background

In his *Law in the Making,* Sir Carleton Kemp Allen described the parental authority in the Roman law as "belong[ing] so peculiarly to the father as 'master of his own house, king and ruler in his own family' that the courts will interfere with [it] as little as possible" (Allen, "Law" 74-75). This description could also be applied to what was going on in ancient Chinese society, whose political order was established in the combination of "fa" 法 (law) and "*Li*" 礼 (rites), ranging from proper personal behavior to the governance of a nation. If an official order conflicted with the command of a father, the son had the right and obligation to obey his father. The legalization of "*Li*" helped formulate a patrimonial and patriarchal system strictly regulated by a hierarchal order, with the king or emperor as the mandated "Son of the Heaven" to govern the nation and the father or Master as the head of the family to receive respect and obedience from the household members. In the *Law of the Tang Dynasty* [Tang lü 唐律], it was legislated that "*zhu zufumu, fumu zai, er zisun bieji yicai zhe, tu sannian*" 诸祖父母、父母在，而子孙别籍、异财者，徒三年 (if the grandparents and parents are still living, the sons and grandsons are not allowed to set up their own households or to divide properties; otherwise, they will be sentenced to jail for three years) (qtd. in Bao and Yin 95); In the *Rules for Household Behavior* [Hubu zeli 户部则例] of the Qing Dynasty, it was written that "*fan zufumu fumu zai,*

zisun buzhun bieli huji, fenyi caichan" 凡祖父母、父母在，子孙不准别立户籍、分异财产 (If the grandparents and parents are still living, the sons and grandsons are not allowed to set up their own households or to divide properties) (qtd. in Ma 53); therefore, "there were no business…no worries…no communications…no societies…[and] no feelings and emotions outside the family. For men, reading classics, going to school, being short-listed on the official recruitment examination, getting promoted, doing business and buying lands and houses…are all for the family" (Zhang and Wang 834). Although the reformers and revolutionists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were aware of the inhibiting impact of feudalism and the patriarchal clan system upon the development of industrialization and democracy, the Confucian norms still dominated people's behavior and regulated social relationships, whose influences were still prevalent even in the 1950s after the People's Republic of China was established. This point could be proved by the decrees published by the government in1953. It overtly criticized some officials of the Communist Party, who "upheld wicked feudal customs, interfered with the freedom of marriage, oppressed women and thus brought about an uninterrupted series of suicides and even homicides" (Van der Valk 45-46).

The social context of China in the early twentieth century could be illuminated by one scene in Mao Dun's family saga novel *Midnight*: in the meeting room of a national capitalist were a tycoon in finance, a magnet in industry and commerce, and a landlord dying but firmly holding *The Tractate of the Most High on Actions and Consequences*, while in the next living room were a

group of young people heatedly discussing reforms, revolutions, wars, stocks, night club girls, romance and poetry.

According to Joseph Needham in *Science and Civilization in China*, after 1400, the development of science and technology in China tended to be in stagnation, while in the West it was in acceleration due to the integration of previous human discoveries and the latest inventions. This disparity was demonstrated to China in a shocking and humiliating way. Since the First Opium War (1940-1942), China was constantly under attacks from different industrialized countries. Even Japan, which was once China's tributary and a small island country, had decisively destroyed China's Northern Navy in 1895, the most modernized naval force in Asia at that time. When in 1912 the last emperor in Chinese history abdicated and the Republic of China was founded, China's territorial sovereignty had already been damaged in a series of postwar treaties. As a defeated country, China had to concede territories, pay indemnities, open trade ports, and hand over the sovereign in customs tariff and foreign affairs to the victorious countries. However, the nation's door, that had once blocked the decadent feudal empire from the outside world for centuries, was blown open. The power of industrialization had demonstrated itself by such things as sharp weapons and an easy life-style, embodied in the telephone, electricity, cars, railways, telegrams and machines used by the Westerners in the concessions. Chinese intellectuals were suddenly alive to the urgency to save China from being colonized through self-strengthening and learning from the West. This idea had been advanced by Wei Yuan as early as in 1842 in his *An Illustrated Gazette of*

Overseas States [Haiguo tuzhi 海国图志].

In 1870, frustrated by the shortage of people who knew how to deal with international affairs and could provide technical guides in the construction of modern shipyards, Zeng Guofan, the Viceroy of the provinces of Jiangxi, Anhui and Zhejiang as well as the Imperial War Commissioner, accepted Yung Wing's advice to send Chinese students abroad to study Western knowledge. Yung Wing was the first Chinese to receive an overseas degree, a bachelor's degree from Yale University in 1854. He was so enlightened by his academic experience in the United States that he took it as his responsibility to help more Chinese students to follow in his footsteps, so that they were able to use western technology to modernize China and strengthen its military forces (Yung 27). At the joint request of Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang, another important official in the imperial court and a literary symbol, the crown finally approved to set up the Chinese Educational Mission to send students to the United States. From 1872 to 1875, a total of 120 students, aged between 9 and 15 and 30 in each year in 4 years in succession, were chosen by the Mission and sent to the United States and lived with the local families (Jin, "Early" para. 12-13). They were the first group of Chinese students officially funded and sent abroad by the Chinese government. Although in 1881 the Qing court stopped the Mission and those students had to come back to China one after another, they brought back modern ideas, technologies and a humanistic spirit, which greatly contributed to the ushering in of a new era of modernization and cultural reforms. Those students, who were back and "known for their ability to get things done", helped "keep many new

technologies in Chinese hands" (Bieler 13). They were the first Chinese to have the following modern careers:

> Thirteen of them served in the diplomatic service of China; six spent most of their lives in connection with the great Kailuan coal mining administration; fourteen of them were either chief engineers or served in managerial capacities on China's newly constructed railroads [including Zhan Tianyou who studied at the University of Yale]; seventeen were naval officers; fifteen were identified with the Government Telegraph Administration; four practiced medicine; three were connected with China's new educational institutions, including Liang Yunyen who became the Minister of Foreign Affairs and helped establish Tsinghua College; Tang Guo'an, the first Principal of Tsinghua University; Cai Shaoji, the first Principal of Tianjin University; and Tang Shaoyi, the first Cabinet Prime Minister of the Republic of China. (Bieler 14).

Starting from 1909, sponsored by the Boxer Rebellion Indemnity Scholarship Program, more intellectuals were chosen "to be sent to the schools of various Western countries to study military administration, shipping administration, infantry tactics, mathematics, manufacturing, and other subjects" (De Bary and Lufrano 241). Among them were philosopher Hu Shi, Nobel Physics prize winner Yang Zhenning, mathematician Zhong Kailai, linguist Zhao Yuanren, and rocket scientist Qian Xuesen. A rough examination of the outstanding scholars or social

activists of the early twentieth century would reveal that most of them had overseas experiences. The striking contrast between a decadent and enclosed feudal empire and the modern and industrialized countries had not only intensified the humiliation of being called the "sick men of East Asia", but also stimulated a strong nationalism among the Chinese elites to save the collapsing country and to enlighten its illiterate and fatuous citizens.

Although the Republic of China was established after the 1911 Revolution, its objectives to achieve self-strengthening, to resist imperialism, and to regain the sovereignty and international standing China once enjoyed turned out to be a failure. The handover of Sun Yat-sen's provisional presidency to Yuan Shikai on 10 March 1912 could be regarded as a "have to" compromise. At that time, Yuan Shikai had already controlled the Northern Warlords, the most powerful military force in China at that time. His dictatorship and suppression of the dissidents were not only the continuity of the feudal dictatorship but also the result of the expansion of his personal ambition. When on 12 December 1915 he declared himself the Emperor of a new Empire of China, the whole nation was irritated and widespread rebellions arose. Therefore, when Yuan Shikai suddenly died on 6 June 1916, the whole nation fell in the chaos of internal wars. During this warlord era, which was normally recognized as ending in 1927, when Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition made decisive victories and his anti-Communist government was sep up in Nanjing, no unified political and military forces were formed; as a result, a comparatively free ideological environment was paradoxically created, which, coincidentally or not, corresponded to what had been instituted in the

Temporary Constitution of the Republic of China [Zhonghua minguo linshi xianzhang 中华民国临时宪章] published by Sun Yat-sen's Nanjing government on 3 December 1911. It said that "the people have the freedom of speech, writing, publication, assembling and association" (item 11, chapter 2). Newspapers, magazines, books, and theatres not only changed the content of people's daily life but also formed an "accelerated politicization of literature" for the purpose of mass education and the salvation of the nation (Feuerwerker 300).

In 1915, the New Culture Movement was started, symbolized by the publication of a journal called *The Youth* [Qingnian zazhi 青年杂志], which was changed to *The New Youth* [Xin Qingnian 新青年] when the second issue was published. Individual freedom, science, democracy and the emancipation of women were the main concerns of this journal. Chen Duxiu once contended that "economy is the pulse of modern lives, and the fundamental principle of the economic production is the independence of the individuals" (Chen, "Call" 5), which, according to Lu Xun, had already been "murdered" by the forbidding Confucian norms (Lu, "Madman's" 10), embodied in "*san gang wu chang*" 三纲五常 (three cardinal guides and five constant virtues) for men and "*san cong si de*" 三从四德 (three obediences and four virtues) for women. The family, the "root of Chinese society" (Lin, "*My*" 175) and the specific symbol of the patriarchal system, became the first target to reform and revolutionize. Furthermore, the family was also the best subject for writers to build on tensions and conflicts between the nation and the individual, the family and the self,

conservatism and reformism, feudalism and modernism, and men and women. The changes in the relationships between family members and how each individual was portrayed all represented a change of social attitudes towards the most important issues in people's daily lives.

The first widely recognized family saga novel was Zhang Henshui's *A Distinguished Family*, which was serialized in 1926 in *World Daily Newspaper* [Shijie ribao 世界日报] and ended in 1932. In 1931, Ba Jin's *Family* was published, also in series, in the newspaper *Times* [Shi Bao 时报]. In the same year, Pearl S. Buck's Nobel Prize winner, *The Good Earth*, was published in New York by the John Day Company. Although Buck was the daughter of an American missionary in China, the content of the novel was set in China, following the ups and downs of a peasant family in the turmoil of wars, floods and starvations of the early twentieth century. In 1933, Mao Dun's *Midnight* was published, which turned out to be the best seller of that year, and was praised by Qu Qiubai as the "first successful realist novel in Chinese history" (Qu 71). In 1939, Lin Yutang's *Moment in Peking* was published in New York by the John Day Company. Although it was written in English and first published in the United States, it was a story concerning trifling family affairs in three rich and prominent families in Beijing and spanned a history of 40 years, from the Boxer Uprising in the 1900s to the Resistance War in the late 1930s. In 1943, Lu Ling's *The Moneybag's Sons and Daughters* was published, and in 1944-1951, Lao She's *The Yellow Storm* was published. When the Communist discourse occupied an unshakeable position, either symbolically in the form of the foundation of the PRC in 1949, or in

practice through a rigid censorship, literary works fell into the formula of serving the politics and took on a homogeneous tone.

1. 2 The Textualization of the Family in the Family Saga Novels

1.2.1 Zhang Henshui's *A Distinguished Family*

The story of *A Distinguished Family* happened in the 1920s. Jin Yanxi, the seventh child and third son of Jin Quan, the Prime Minister of the Republican government, fell in love at the first sight with Leng Qingqiu, a talented high school student from an ordinary family. After various efforts, Yanxi won Qingqiu's love and they got married. After they lived together in the Jin family, the originally existing but ignored conflicts between them came to the surface. Qingqiu hoped Yanxi to start his own professional career to support their own family, while Yanxi, together with his two brothers, led a luxurious life, either having parties, or playing around with actresses and brothel girls. Qingqiu began to isolate herself by living in a remote quarter in that big mansion with her son, and Yanxi resumed his pursuit after Bai Xiuzhu, whose brother was an influential politician and even controlled Jin Quan's political career; at the same time another two actresses became his prey. In the end, under the pressure of political dissensions and internal family turmoil, Jin Quan suffered a stroke and died quickly. Qingqiu and her son escaped from the Jin family in a big fire and sent back a letter announcing her divorce from Yanxi, who had decided to go to the United States with his second sister; Jin Quan's youngest and favorite concubine ran away with huge money; Madam Jin withdrew to the Xishan Mountain in the

suburb of Beijing to spend the rest of her life reading religious books; and Yanxi's brothers and sisters all moved out to begin their own separate lives. This once distinguished aristocratic family thus collapsed.

Zhang Henshui's *A Distinguished Family* could be regarded as the first well-received family saga novel in the twentieth century. Its success not only lay in its artistic crafts, but also in the portrayal of a typical big family in the chaos of social transformations. Many critics suggested that it was a story about Leng Qingqiu – how she was seduced by the youngest son of the Prime Minister, how her independence had been subordinated in the aristocratic family, and how she was abandoned and fell to the lower social class (Di and Wang; Ren; Wang, "Special"). This interpretation might be associated with the structure of this novel. It was started with a prologue, in which Leng Qingqiu was described as a mysterious and talented woman, whose unexpected appearance in the open market, selling instantly composed couplets, and sudden disappearance triggered the author's curiosity and, thus, the being of this novel; this novel also ended with an epilogue, telling how Yanxi was acting out their love story in the movie, while Leng Qingqiu and their son sat in the audience to watch the movie. It was true that Leng Qingqiu was the thread of the whole story, but what the author wanted to express, I think, was more than the concern for any single person; this novels is more like a lament on the changes in society and the uncertainty of people's fate in the turbulence, caused by wars and conflicts among the Nationalist government, the Communist Party, the warlords and foreign aggressors.

The Jin family could be taken as a miniature of *that* society: it was structured upon the feudal patriarchal system, although western ideologies had been introduced and night clubbing or overseas studies became the fashion. A tension was thus established. On the one hand, all the Jin family members were quite open to new ideas, but on the other hand a feudal bureaucratic system was still functioning and the traditional ethic norms were still the yardstick for governing the family activities and regulating people's behaviors. For example, although Jin Quan was the Prime Minister of the Republican government, he was a feudal Master in his family; although Madam Jin talked about her travels with Jin Quan in the western countries, Confucian classics, such as *The Tractate of the Most High on Actions and Consequences* and the Buddhist classic *Diamond Sutra* [Jingang ji 金刚经] were her must-read in daily life; although Jin Yanxi broke the traditional code of marriage of property, his habits of seeking pleasure by doing nothing seriously, spending money carelessly and hanging about with various women was typical of feudal and aristocratic young masters.

The tragic end of both the noble families and the ordinary people demonstrated that everyone was a victim of the uncompromising conflicts in the period of social transformations. Although the author showed great sympathy with Leng Qingqiu after she was married into the Jin family, she was somewhat blamed for her vanity, which in the end defeated her sound judgment. She knew clearly at the very beginning that Yanxi was a coxcomb and she must be very cautious not to make any mistakes in a feudal and aristocratic family after being married into it. However, her independence and pride in front of an empty-headed

coxcomb began to collapse when Yanxi persistently bought her gifts and took care of her mother and uncle. On the other hand, Yanxi's sincerity in pursuing her was portrayed as truely as his indifference to her after their marriage; this seemed to be the nature of a feudal aristocratic young master, and how could Qingqiu expect Yanxi to be a husband who was intellectually industrious, financially independent and emotionally faithful, like a middle class intellectual might be? So Qingqiu's tragedy was somewhat caused by herself. As for Yanxi, from the very beginning he knew clearly what he was pursuing: "if it is for fun, those modern and party girls are more enjoyable; but if it is for marriage, those simple and plain girls are more preferable; they know how to keep the house. That girl [Qingqiu] must be gentle, and her love must be pure. She will not interfere with my privacy, while those party girls must" (Zhang, "*Distinguished*" 35). The problem is he did not expect Qingqin would be so independent and stubbornly try to change his private life and even his life philosophy. The conflict between them seemed to have resulted from their different class backgrounds, value systems and living habits, but it could also be taken as the result of Confucian gender culture.

A Distinguished Family was published after the foreign concessions were set up in China, after the last empire was overthrown, after the New Culture and May Fourth Movements, and the publication of its last part was even after Japan had invaded northeastern China; however, this novel did not overtly criticize feudalism, nor advocated for women's liberation as the May Fourth or revolutionary literature did; instead, it lamented over the bygone of the empire and the uncontrollability of the fate of the nation and individual persons. This

helplessness was clearly demonstrated in the preface to this novel: "In the universe, isn't life an uncontrollable tragedy? ...How can I predict the future? This is the main idea of this novel and also the preface. Man's fate is unpredictable" (Zhang, "*Distinguished*" 1). The end of this story seemed to show that to escape into the religious world or to the foreign countries might be a choice; however, in the epilogue, Yanxi's coming back to China from the United States and becoming an actor seemed to prove that there was nowhere to escape.

A Distinguished Family was once compared to "the Republican version of *A Dream of Red Mansions*" (2). Zhang Henshui knew this and he wrote in the preface to this novel: "someone said that *A Distinguished Family* seemed to be imitating *A Dream of Red Mansions*, so much so that it could be called the new version of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, to which my answer is 'no comment'; someone else also said that *A Distinguished Family* synopsized the situations of all aristocratic families in modern China, to which my answer is also 'no comment'. The benevolent see benevolence and the wise see wisdom. Why should there be only one standard or model? It is not bad to hear different comments, but there is no need to argue" (2).

1.2.2 Ba Jin's *Family*

Different from Zhang Henshui who held an overall pessimism over the destructive effect of the wars and social transformations and a general sympathy with everyone in *that* society, Ba Jin demonstrated a clear stand of attacking the "cannibalistic feudalism". In *Family*, the feudal old masters were either "feared

and respected" like the Venerable Master Gao, or loathsome and prurient as Master Feng, who was "one of the main pillars of the Confucian Morals Society" (Ba, "*Family*" 213). Women in this novel were all victims of the patriarchal system - from the Venerable Master Gao's wife Madam Zhou to his most favorite concubine Chen and to the maiden servants like Mingfeng. In this family, everything reflected a social order: there were "seats of honor" at the dining table, and each family member took their seats "according to rank" (101); "all the wine cups at the table of the Venerable [Gao] rose in union with his" (102); and it was the venerable Master Gao who was "the first to kowtow to the ancestral shrine" and "the others followed in this order" (115). At the top of this hierarchical family system was the Venerable Master Gao, "a severe, forbidding man whom all feared and respected" (64). Although four households lived in this gentry family "trying to grab a bit more of the family property" with "open quarrels and secret wrangles" (22), the Venerable Master Gao held an unshakeable authoritative position through giving orders, setting up norms, regulating social relations and receiving young generations' morning greetings and evening reports. In this family, the most important thing for the family members was to read *The Tractate of the Most High on Actions and Consequences* and to know the proprieties of how to behave and where one's place was in the familial and social hierarchical order. The Gao family thus became the symbol of the feudal and patriarchal system, whose institutions, including the family, were strictly built upon the Confucian codes of "*sangang wuchang*" (three cardinal guides and five constant

virtues) for men and "*sanchong side*" (three obediences and four virtues) for women.

Ba Jin's *Family* was widely recognized as the representative of anti-feudalism. Different from other family saga novels in this group which were normally set in Shanghai, Beijing or other costal big cities, where foreign influences and new cultures could be more timely and interactively felt, this story happened in a remote and comparatively isolated town northwest of Chengdu, a city in the southwest of China. The Gao family seemed to have some local influence but the whole area seemed not to have many connections with the political, economic and cultural centers like Shanghai or Beijing. There was only one bookstore that sold journals like "*New Youth* of the New Culture Movement" (39).

The story setting was within the Gao family. Against a remote background of China in progress and change, the decadency and obstinacy of the local culture seemed to be more unbearable and suffocating, and the conflict between the Venerable Master Gao and Juehui was thus allegorized as the conflict between two systems and ideologies. The Venerable Master Gao represented the decadent feudalism, while Juehui symbolized a new and progressive force, whose destination was to overthrow the old and decadent feudal system. Inspired by western ideologies of science and democracy and having witnessed so many sufferings around him caused by the feudal ethics and bureaucratic system, Juehui was determined to fight to end the decadent system and to waken the people who were imprisoned by the Confucian norms.

Personally, the Venerable Master Gao was full of expectations and affections for his grandsons. He closely kept an eye on their behaviors, set up social relationships for them, opened work channels for them, and constantly gave them advice on how to be successful in society and to make the family more prosperous; when he got the news that the local government would suppress the students' demonstrations, his concern for Juehui was so genuinely felt; and his effort of wanting to be an amiable old man was vividly demonstrated when he said at the New Year Eve's dinner that "you feel free…please eat" (136).

As the eldest son of the eldest son, Juexin's commitment to the maintenance of the feudal family was destined "from the moment he came into the world" (Ba, "*Family*" 35). His tragedy lay in the conflict he felt between his individuality and the Confucian filial piety embodied in *The Tractate of the Most High on Actions and Consequences*: "the minister who is unwilling to die at his sovereign's command is not loyal; the son who is unwilling to die at his father's command is not filial" (86). As a result, he became a man "with a split personality". On the one hand, "he was a spineless and supine Young Master" (44), whose working constitutions had been tuned to the established norms, so much so that he "never thought of resisting" (37) and "he complyed with his father's will without a trace of resentment" (37); however, on the other hand, "he was the youth of new order" (44), who dreamed of university education and free love. It was this sacrifice of individuality and independence in the name of being virtuous and filial that was identified by Juehui as the real reason for China's decay and spinelessness. Through the configuration that Juexin was intelligent but blindly stuck to a rotten

system, Ba Jin pointed out the urgency for the young people to leave the family and join in the revolution to smash the old world and establish a new one.

Judging by the books read by Juehui, China was still at the beginning of the enlightenment introduced by the intellectual elites. Juehui read Liang Qichao's *The Soul of China* and *Citizens' Guide to Elementary Politics*, demanding constitutional reform and military conscription; later he was inspired by the "more progressive theories" advanced in the New Culture and May Fourth Movements (Ba, "*Family*" 93); however, as commented by the narrator, although Juehui had realized that "a real man ought to cast off family ties…go out into the world and perform deeds" he had only "the vaguest notion…as to what kind of deeds these should be" (21) and he "was full of contradictions" (95).

Besides advocacy against feudalism and for personal freedom, Russian influence was keenly felt in this novel. Russian novels were Juehui's favorites. Ba Jin once confessed in a letter to Jean Monsterleet in 1948 that he "liked [Russian novels] tremendously, because the conditions of life in Russia closely resembled those of the Chinese people of that period. The characters, the aspirations and tastes of the Russians were somewhat similar to ours" (Ming 30). The victory of the Russian revolution inspired him as it did to Juexin in *Family*. Ba Jin himself once said that "I insisted that, for the sake of revolution, ideals and a lofty purpose, we should not fear to suffer; instead, we should be willing to suffer, because suffering was the motivation and suffering was the pride at that time" (Ba, "*Memoir*" 32). When explaining why Ba Jin became the young readers' favorite, Jean Monsterleet said that "Pa Chin won them over with his treatment of

problems crucial to them at that time: the family, freedom to choose one's partner in marriage, love among young people, and the giving of one's self to a cause… To express passion, his style becomes impetuous; in moments of calm it flows like pure and limpid spring water" (Monsterleet 284-285).

1.2.3 Mao Dun's *Midnight*

Among all the novels published in the Republican period, *Midnight* was the most intensive in dealing with time. The story took place within two months. All the conflicts concerning the social problems, the domestic and international tensions, and the crises that China was facing at that time had been embodied in the fights, competitions and compromises among the financiers, capitalists, entrepreneurs, workers, and the feudal landlords.

The opening scene of this novel was Shanghai, totally modernized, characterized by such things as trolley buses, skyscrapers, neon advertising signs, cars and trade unions. Surrounded by such a noisy and rapidly changing environment, the Venerable Master Wu, who came from the countryside and tightly held the Confucian classic *The Tractate of the Most High on Actions and Consequences*, would definitely be shocked to death. In this novel, the death of feudalism was announced to be destined, although its leftovers were still in practice in some way. New conflicts emerged in the process of modernization, which were more vigorous and brutal, full of intelligence and flexibility. If morality was the main weapon for the feudalists to control people's behavior and ideology, now it was the age of business and commerce. In this novel, money

became the yardstick for the protagonists to decide whether to unite or to break up; friends or relatives could immediately become enemies due to the conflicts in the distribution of profit; the proletarian class, for the first time, was heavily portrayed through conflicts and compromises between the factory owner, the union leader, and the workers.

Wu Sunpu was the product of western education and urban culture. His charisma lay in his determination to develop national industries. He took the kinship enterprise in the rural area as his back base and the textile factory in Shanghai as his modern kingdom to compete against financial brokers and foreign economic investors. However, due to the chaotic situation and a general economic crisis, he fell into financial difficulties. His hopes to collect money from his back base fell through, due to the revolts of the peasants, and his deduction of the workers' salaries led to a violent strike; he heavily speculated at the stock exchange but was defeated by his opponent Zhang Botao, a confidential agent of international banking interests. His failure represented the failure of national capitalists in that age, when, as discussed by Fritz Gruner, "the compromise between national capital and feudal and foreign forces did not result in the development of national industry, but in its decline" (Gruner 136).

To increase the sense of modernity and change, time played an important function in this novel: the uprisings of the peasants, the strike of the workers, the bankruptcy of the capitalists, the rises and falls of stocks, the war and love, and the night clubs and a general poor life – all these contents were concentrated in the time span of two months. The events were calculated throught the time units

of days, hours and minutes to show the intensity of the conflicts between the workers and Sunpu during the strike and among the capitalists and brokers in the economic crisis. This tension was typically represented by the rich people's feverishness in sensual pleasures – "a dance of death", as commented by Fan Wenbo, a poet in this novel. He discussed that "the more bankruptcies the rural area has, the more freakily the urban area has developed, the higher the price is for rice and gold, the more furious the domestic wars become, and the more prevailing the peasant revolts are, the more desperate these rich people's 'dance of death' is" (Mao, "*Midnight*" 69). To a certain degree, Mao Dun's *Midnight* had representatively portrayed the life in the modern city in an age of modernization and transformation in the early twentieth century, when all social problems and conflicts between various classes were intensified.

Mao Dun, as his name indicated, was generally pessimistic and full of doubt about the nature of revolution. As one of the first collaborators for the magazine *New Youth*, he was actively engaged in the realization of the social functions of literature. With several friends, he established the Society of Literary Research in 1921. In 1924, he went to Canton to take part in the Revolution and in 1926 he headed to Wuhan, actively engaged in political propaganda for the left-wing elements in the Nationalist Party. In the end, his enthusiasm for revolution was gone and he groaned that "Before the Revolution one built up many illusions around it. It came and disillusion came with it" (qtd. in Monsterleet 285).When commenting on Mao Dun's works produced during the Revolutionary period, Monsterleet used the expression of "as depressing as a foggy day in Shanghai"

(286). Besides the disappointment Mao Dun had towards the revolution going on at that time, illness was another depressing issue that he had to face. As he noted:

> *Midnight* was started in October 1931 and finished in December 1932. During this period of time, writing was often stopped due to my illness, various things, wars in Shanghai, and hot weather. It was finished in haste without much polishing or revising…I knew there were many problems in it; however, I was exhausted and the neurasthenia was threatening me again. I could not afford to dwell on it any more. It was published, anyway (Mao, "Postscript" 83).

According to Mao Dun, *Midnight* was intended to discuss the following three issues: 1) due to the invasion of the imperialist economy, the impact of the worldwide Great Economic Depression and the bankruptcy of the rural economy, the national industrialists had to intensify their exploitations to the workers; 2) there was a prevalent rebellion of the proletariats in politics and economy; and 3) the war between the North and South, the bankruptcy of the rural economy and the riots of the peasants all further deepened the crisis faced by the national industry (Mao, "Postscript" 86). Although written intermittently and finished in haste, *Midnight* has demonstrated the author's expertise in portraying different characters based on their living backgrounds and professions: patriarchal landlords, evil tyrants, warlords, proletariats, capitalists, compradors, intellectuals and innocent young men and women in an age of wars and transformations.

1.2.4 Lao She's *The Yellow Storm*

Lao She's trilogy, *The Yellow Storm*, focused on several households living in the Little Sheep Fold in Beijing. The story began in 1937, just before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, and ended in the mid-1940s, after the surrender of Japan. If there were any works representative of revolutionary novel in the Republican period, *The Yellow Storm* is obviously one of them. From the very beginning, the author demonstrated a very clear political stand: anti-feudalism and anti-imperialism. Therefore, the characterization was strictly based on the line that those who demonstrated traditional Chinese virtues and took part in activities to defend the nation against the Japanese invasion, were good; otherwise, they were scurvy and evil. In light of this, Old Man Qi, Fourth Master Li, and Wang the Third were praiseworthy, because they all demonstrated good qualities that the Chinese people should have: hardworking, upright, self-respecting, responsible, and patriotic; Old Man Qian was especially praiseworthy for his "learning and character" (Lao, "Yellow" 15) and his anti-Japanese spirit. For the younger generation, Old Man Qi's eldest and third grandsons Ruishuan and Ruiquan and Old Man Qian's second son Zhongshi were all praiseworthy, because they were the youth who "wanted to leave their homes and burst forth as free men, free from the oppression of family and society" (40). On the contrary, Guan the Morning Lotus, his wife, Big Red Pepper, and their friends, like war loads and the Japanoltry guy Mr. Lan, were despicable. While the former group was praised in glorious colors, the latter group was degraded in negative colors. For example, Mr. Qian was compared to "an old-time book, its characters large and clear, in quiet

good taste and dignified" (75), while "no matter how much [Big Red Pepper] powders and rouges she cannot cover up the wrinkles [on her face] and the black spots [on her nose]" (20). The politicized characterization was not only embodied in the descriptions of people's appearances, but also in their behaviors, when the nation was in crisis and opportunism prevailed; for example, when Old Man Qian learned that his second son had destroyed a whole truck load of Japanese soldiers and been killed by the Japanese, he felt proud and said, "I cannot kill the enemy and cleanse us of our national shame. I can only face danger without fear" (77); on the contrary, Eastern Sun, Morning Lotus, and Ruifeng were called "traitors" by Ruixuan, because they kowtowed to the Japanese (157) and behaved like little creeps.

Besides adopting the paradigm of polarization in the portrayal of characters, Lao She also paid attention to the description of the local lives and dialects in Beijing. The observation point of the narrator was the Qi house, located in the chest of the Little Sheep Fold, which was shaped like a thin-waisted gourd. Due to the inferior location of the Little Sheep Fold and the bad "forms and structures" of the houses in each "mixed compounds", its inhabitants were mostly middle or lower classes: Mr. Qian was a poet and sometimes "suffered hunger"; Fourth Master Li was a cart puller, who had a "permanent swelling on his neck" resulting from his "moving people's possessions from one house to another" (16); Sun the Seventh was a barber; Little Sui was a rickshaw puller; John Ding was a table-boy in the British Embassy; Master Liu was a mat-shed builder; and Little Wen and his wife were opera singers. The "handsomest house in the Little Sheep" was

owned by Guan the Morning Lotus, who had two wives and was dressed in "the most fashionable and well-fitting" clothes. Therefore, this Guan family and the rest of the households in the Little Sheep Fold formed a contrast; struggles were displayed between them, revolting around who hated the Japanese and who licked their boots.

Mao Zedong's theory on class stratification and anti-Japanese united front was embodied in this novel. Guan and Guan's families and friends were all Japanophiles, who took advantage of the national crisis to serve the Japanese and to collect money through blackmails or selling information to the Japanese secret service in Beiping, while other laborers or poor intellectuals were patriotic, upright and backboned. The end of the story also echoed the Communist Party's moral lessons that traitors would not have good ends and China respected all those Japanese who were friendly to Chinese people and admitted their guilt at the end of the War. Therefore, Guan's house was robbed and sealed by the Japanese, to whom the Guan family had provided a lot of services; to intensify how shameful and pitiful the Japanophiles were, the author's voice was heard through the narrator's comments: "all understood the ingratitude and meanness of the Japanese. They let the traitors do evil and then, pretending to be righteous, they cleared out the traitors. They take not only what the [Guans] have squeezed under the Japanese but also take all that they have originally had" (376). In this way, the novel achieved the propagandistic goal that anyone, who would like to serve Japanese, would be held in contempt not only by the Chinese but also by the Japanese.

In a certain sense, *The Yellow Storm* was a fictionalized propaganda of the Communist Party's policies during the Anti-Japanese War. Readers might naturally associate this with Lao She's revolutionary background. He had been the head of the All-China Anti-Japanese Writers Federation since 1938 when it was founded until 1946 when he left for the United States. When in 1949 the PRC was established, Lao She returned back to China and was appointed to important positions in the Cultural and Educational Committee in the Government Administration Council, the National People's Congress, the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the All-China Federation of Literature and Art, the Union of Chinese Writers, and the Beijing Federation of Literature and Art. The third part of this giant novel was written while Lao She was in the United States and published in 1950 after he returned back to China. The whole content of this novel could be completely summarized by Mao Zedong's following documents: "Policies, Measures and Perspectives for Resisting the Japanese Invasion" (13-22), "Proclamation by the Government of the [Shan-Gan-Ning] Border Region and the Rear Headquarters of the Eight Route Army" (75-78), "On Policy" (441-450), and "Talk at Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" (69-98), published separately on July 23, 1937, May 15, 1938, December 25, 1940 and May 2, 1942. In the first document, the Communist Party was called on to

> immediately lift the ban on patriotic movements among the masses and let the people give full play to their enthusiasm for armed resistance.

> Immediately mobilize all the country's land, sea and air forces for action. Immediately weed out all the hidden traitors and Japanese agents in China and so consolidate our rear. (Mao, "Policies" 14)

This was the spirit that ran through the whole novel. In the second document, Mao Zedong enthusiastically praised that "The army and the people of our [Shan-Gan-Ning] Border Region have followed the Government's leadership and devoted their efforts to the cause of national salvation. Whatever they have done has been just and honorable" (Mao, "Proclamation" 75), and that was why in the novel Ruiquan realized that "China was theirs [peasants in the Northwest]" (Lao, "Yellow" 438). In the third document, Mao Zedong suggested to "employ a revolutionary dual policy…to struggle against…[and] to draw" (Mao, "Policy" 443), and, therefore, in *The Yellow Storm* Guan's first daughter Meidi was killed by Ruiquan, because she was an information provider to the Japanese, but Guan's second daughter Gaodi became Ruiquan's future wife and was welcomed into Old Man Qi's family, because she had participated in the Anti-Japanese activities. In the last document, Mao Zedong clearly pointed out what an intellectual should do, if he or she would not like to be a "misfit". He wrote:

> I came to feel that compared with the workers and peasants the unremoulded intellectuals were not clean and that, in the last analysis, the workers and peasants were the cleanest people and, even though their hands were soiled and their feet smeared with cow-dung, they were really

> cleaner than the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectuals. That is what is meant by a change in feelings, a change from one class to another…Without such a change, without such remoulding, they can do nothing well and will be misfits. (Mao, "Talk" 73)

Echoing these statements, Lao She let the narrator make the comments on how Ruiquan had been changed from an intellectual/university student into a proletarian soldier through joining in Mao-led revolutions:

> he had some knowledge and liked cleanliness, but he realized that he lacked the unadulterated strength of the countryman and the wisdom that grew out of the soil…when he saw his clothes begin to wear out, the dust on his shoes, and the black earth under his nails, he not only did not feel uncomfortable but proud. He began to give up the arrogance of the university student and decided to work with the country people and fight the enemy with them" (Lao, "*Yellow*" 438).

What a similarity there is between Mao's statements and Ruiquan's confessions in the passage above!

C.T. Hsia once made a comparison between Lao She and Mao Dun. He commented, "Mao Dun records the passive feminine response to the chaotic events of contemporary Chinese history; more concerned with individual destinies than social forces, Lao She shows his heroes in action" (Hsia, "*History*" 165). As

far as Lao She's *The Yellow Storm* and Mao Dun's *Midnight* are concerned, this comment is not completely right, because both of these two novels demonstrated a deep concern for national issues, and Sunpu in *Midnight* was more a doer in developing national industries rather than only caring about his own benefits or losses.

1.2.5 Lu Ling's *The Money Bag's Sons and Daughters*

After Lu Ling's *The Money Bag's Sons and Daughters* was published in 1944, it was quickly overshadowed by Lao She's *The Yellow Storm*, due to its alienated theme and writing style. Instead of being a propagandistic work of the Communist Party, it demonstrated a deep sympathy with the feudal Master Jian Sanjie and it showed a thorough understanding towards the hesitation, vacillation and vulnerability of the youth in face of the national crisis and personal disasters. Jiang Shaozu, the second son of the Jiang family, was a celebrity of anti-feudalism at the beginning of the novel. He abandoned his rich family, which had been prestigious for generations, and joined in the revolutionary activities. However, when the revolution met its trough, he suddenly realized that "he could not bear to be torn away from the old familiar lifestyle: theatres, coffee houses, tennis court, swimming pool, good food and splendid clothes…He gradually learned to be flattering and polite to some people, while cold and arrogant to others; and he became amiable and easy-going to his close friends" (Lu, "*Moneybag's*" 244); after declaring his rebellion against his rich family for four years, he suddenly realized that "his father's money might be contributive for him

to achieve a successful career" (256), and, ironically, he suddenly felt a real sympathy with his old father - "because everyone wants to exploit him and they are encroaching the Jiang family" (257). In this manner, Jiang Shaozu, once a determined revolutionist, became a thorough opportunist. On the contrary, his elder brother Jiang Weizu, at first a typical Confucian scholar and a docile son, gradually changed into a rebel of the family. He hated his weakness in the relationship with his sneaky and lecherous wife, but all he could do was to further humiliate himself by pleasing or insulting her in public. In the end, he became mad and drowned himself. He was ruined by his rich family and an evil woman who was a stunner but also a money hunter who knew her strength and how to make the best use of it. Jiang Chunzu, the third son of the Jiang family, was the most strongly colored character in this novel. He was a brave doer in an age full of turbulence and crisis: he hated all social evils and went to the military front to fight against the Japanese invaders; he joined in the propagandistic troupe and taught in the countryside; however, he was at the same time a typical vacillator who withdrew in front of toughness and oppression. He could not bear disorders and corruptions in the military front and escaped to the back area; he then was disappointed at the meaningless life of the troupe and jumped to the countryside to teach in the primary school; however, when faced with evil forces in the countryside, he withdrew again back to the city and died in poverty and illness. The father, the Master of the property of the Jiang family, turned out to be the most pity-inspiring character in the sufferings caused by wars and familial turmoil. He voluntarily gave up treasures and properties to his greedy daughter-in-law in

the hope that she might be kind to his eldest son, and he gave the most valuable gifts to his second daughter, who was academic and immune to human greediness and sneakiness. He knew everything in a wise way but had no power to change what fate had arranged for him. On the contrary, Xia Lu, who should have been the most determined and enthusiastic revolutionary according to the code of revolutionary or Communist fiction, was portrayed as a miserable loser. He came from a poor family, engaged himself in the anti-Japanese activities, hated the wealthy classes, and wanted to change the evil society; however, he was obviously unable to find any good ways to do so, and he could not even better his own life. He was frustrated, dislocated, and cynical - he struggled between personal misery and national crisis. Wang Guiying, a beautiful young woman intellectual, left her family and came to Shanghai for opportunities, but she ended up as a social butterfly. All the characters in this novel seemed to live in a neurotic, restless and self-centered world, which, in Denton's words, "not only threatened some of the basic ideological tenets of the emerging Maoist doctrine but also disrupted the CCP's efforts to gain control over writers and more generally, the individual" (Denton 2).

Lu Ling was closely associated with Hu Feng. His talent in literature was firstly discovered by Hu Feng; his early works were mainly published in the magazine *July* [Qiyue 七月], whose chief editor was Hu Feng. When the Anti-Hu Feng Campaign was started early in 1955, Lu Ling, as one of Hu Feng's associates, was arrested and his works, taken as advocating individualistic heroism and thus threatening the Marxist materialist ideology and Mao's mass

line, were criticized and even "erased" from Chinese literary history. However, a careful study shows that in *The Moneybag's Sons and Daughters* there exist deep concerns for the nation's future and a strong hatred for the social evils and the darkness of the human heart, which were the two parallel themes in this novel. However, the writing style and theme adopted in this novel were so different from those advocated by the Left-wing or Communist literary aesthetics that its alienation was obvious.

Different critiques have been written to comment on Lu Ling's literary works. The most noticeable one was the emphasis of Lu Ling's spiritual exploration in a society full of darkness and greed (Cao, "Collapse"; Hu, "Preface"), but few had associated Lu Ling's "insanity" or "unsettlement" with the crisis he himself might had felt in an age full of wars, poverty, death, famine or anxiety, so that desperation took hold of every heart, and the spiritual state of the whole population was low. Jian Sanjie's comment, "they [kids] will very quickly learn to be cruel when there is no more food left," was very illuminating of this situation (398). Kirk A. Denton took "the problematic of self" as his starting point to approach Lu Ling. He noticed that the energy and power, generated from within the self, was the main concern of Lu Ling's works, which, however, was not only used for self-fulfillment but also the creation of a more impartial, wealthy and humanistic society. Denton, through his careful and insightful reading of *The Money Bag's Sons and Daughters*, stated that from its "structural discontinuities" to its portrayal of the "predicament between Promethean self-assertion and Wertherian self-annihilation," Lu Ling wanted to express the tensions set up

between the intellectual self and the social restriction (Denton 185). In Denton's words, Lu Ling "finds himself trapped…between the May Fourth romantic view of intellectual self-consciousness and the religious divination of the People-*cum*-History that evolved out of the leftist discourse of the 1930s-1940s" (190). This agrees with what Lu Ling once confessed that "what I tried to search but in vain is the primitive force and the liberation of people's personalities" (Yu, "Several" 7). This point was further specified by Lu Ling himself as "the strong desire to fight against the bond of feudalism. This desire is naïve, natural and impulsive. Its spontaneity is the result of man's primitive and natural requirement in front of history. It is the embryonic form of personal liberation and class consciousness, and it is the foundation of revolution and leadership" (7). In light of Denton's theory and Lu Ling's own discussions, what Lu Ling tried to explore was the tension between personal free will and social restrictions. He wanted to demonstrate the heroic nature of the primitive force in human nature, but in the end he had to lament over its tragic ending, caused by personal weakness and social corruptions. In this uncompromising conflict, Lu Ling's characters had to experience both the heroic inspirations and the cowards' vileness, and in the end his heroes were either dead or insane. Jiang Chunzu in *The Moneybag's Sons and Daughters*, Guo Su'e in *Hungry Guo Su'e* [Ji'e de Guo Su'e 饥饿的郭素娥], Zhang Xiaolai in *The Hero's Dance* [Yingxiong de wudao 英雄的舞蹈], or Guo Zilong in *The Burning Wasteland* [Ranshao de huangdi 燃烧的荒地] – almost all of Lu Ling's main characters lived in the turbulence of trying to be themselves but having to negotiate with the social restraints surrounding them. They were

neurotic but, at the same time, heroic. They distinguished themselves by energy, wisdom, courage and independent spirit but, in the end, death seemed to be their only choice. Perhaps as early as in the 1940s, Lu ling had already foreseen his fate and tragic end.

As early as in 1948, the Communist orthodox critics began to criticize Hu Feng and Lu Ling through *Collections of Art and Literature for the Masses* [Dazhong congkan 大众文艺丛刊]. They argued that Lu Ling's characters were not real, because peasants and workers could not have such complicated feelings and, therefore, it was Lu Ling who imposed his own bourgeois ideologies onto the images of the peasants and workers; secondly, Lu Ling was wrong because he did not find the creative forces among the masses, who were oppressed but waited to be wakened to rise against the oppressors. The real reason that Lu Ling was criticized, in my opinion, was his pursuit and ideology - the primitive force and individual liberation, which were in conflict with Mao Zedong's proletarian theories. Lu Ling did not realize what terrible results might occur if his literary pursuit was different from what the Communist Party had prescribed. He argued and this only led to more resentment against him. Although Lu Ling later wrote many works, sincerely advocating the masses' enthusiasm and unselfishness in socialist construction, he was constantly criticized until 1952 when he was publicly declared to belong to the Hu Feng Literary Faction, whose practice was defined as "against Mao Zedong's line on literature and art" (Shu 3). He was put in jail in 1955 when the Anti-Hu Feng Champaign started.

1. 3 Interactions between Literature and Society

In 1998, Wang Yaosheng made a survey through the files in the First Chinese Historical Archive on "Marriage and Family" spanning from 1781 to 1791. Based on the information on 2000 ordinary families from different provinces, he concluded that in China during the mid- and late-eighteenth century, nuclear families, with parents and their children living together, predominated and accounted for 57.04% of the total; lineal families, with parents and one married son and his families living together, accounted for 29.04%; compound families, with parents and more than two married sons and their families living together, accounted for 6.75%, and single families and defective families accounted separately for 4.53% and 1.23%. (Wang, "Family" 167, 176). The following table was cited from Qiao Zhiqiang's *The Social History of Modern China* [Zhongguo Jindai Shehuishi 中国近代社会史] published in 1992 (91).

类别 Category / 省区 Province /District	嘉庆二十五年(1820 年) 1820, the 25th year of the Jiaqing Period			宣统三年(1911 年) 1911, the 3rd year of the Xuantong Period		
	户数 No. of sample HH	口数 No. of sample Population	户均口数 Ave. Size of HH	户数 No. of sample HH	口数 No. of sample Population	户均口数 Ave. Size of HH
Zhili 直隶	3951477	22430748	5.67	5187758	26721353	5.15
Fengtian 奉天	129653	133815	10.32	1707642	11018517	6.45
Shanxi 山西	2394903	16378904	6.83	2097082	10099135	4.82
Henan 河南	4772097	25888005	5.42	4661566	26109931	5.60
Shandong 山东	4548817	31445329	6.91	5380277	29556688	5.49

Gansu 甘肃	2175754	17722321	8.14	907940	4700058	5.18
Zhejiang 浙江	4823524	29362308	6.08	4251383	18072226	4.25
Jiagxi 江西	4379629	25126078	5.73	3439873	16977029	4.94
Hebei 湖北	4314737	29544241	6.84	4938625	27646651	5.6
Hunan 湖南	3235317	18991741	5.87	4349371	23402992	5.38
Fujia 福建	3377525	20035979	5.93	2515756	12500266	4.97
Guangxi 广西	1279015	7622423	5.95	1393467	7789480	5.59
Yunnan 云南	1118174	7096088	6.34	1548034	7209888	4.66
Guizhou 贵州	1118884	5526154	4.93	1771533	8702964	4.91

Based on the statistics provided in this table, it is easy to see that, except for a few occasions, in the nineteenth century, the average size of the households was about 5-6 persons, while in the early twentieth century it was around 4-5 persons. The tendency of declination was obvious. In 1926-1927, the National League made a survey in Beiping (officially called Beijing in 1949) among 48 households, the average size of the households was 4.6 persons (Jin, "Investigation" 80). In 1928, a survey made by the Nanjing and Shanghai governments among 16 cities around Nanjing and Shanghai showed that the average size of the household was 5.08 persons (Wang, "Estimate" 37); at the same time, the average size of the household in small cities or towns, such as Wuhu, Datong and Lin Huai, was 5.08 persons (Chen, "Change" 151). Although most of the investigations were made in cities and towns, the results were similar that the size of the family was no larger

than 7 persons since mid-eighteenth century to the Republican period. Based on Wang Yaosheng's observation, the popular family pattern from the late Qing to the Republican period was: after sons got married, they would set up their own households, with wife and children; if the parents were still living, they usually lived with one married son and his household, or stayed with those unmarried children (Wang, "Family" 177). This conclusion was basically in agreement with what Ma Changwei had reported based on a back-track survey made in 1982 by the Centre of Population Studies, the Chinese Academy of the Social Sciences. It said that "based on an investigation made among seven cities and their suburbs, the nuclear families occupied 31.9% of the total, the linear families stood for 42.5%, and the compound families accounted for 21.6% during the ten years from 1930 to 1940" (Ma 54). This result was, however, in conflict with Wang Yaosheng's survey mentioned before and also partially disagreed with the *Rules for Household Behavior* written in the law of the Qing dynasty.

In whatever situation as shown above, even with variations existing, big families were already rare in the Republican period. According to Du Zhengsheng, a Taiwanese historian, the size of the family in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.) averaged less than 5 members, and parents only lived with unmarried children and together they shared the properties, while the size of the family in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) could be as big as 10 members with several generations living under the same roof and sharing the properties. He further postulated that the size of the family in the Song Dynasty (960-1276A.D.) was usually 5 people, and it was rare for married sons to live with their parents and

other siblings. He concluded that after the mid-Tang Dynasty, families tended to be smaller, and after the Song Dynasty, it was very popular for the married sons to establish their own households, and as far as the family structure was concerned, parents usually lived with their unmarried children (Du, "Classic" 837-839).

In light of the surveys mentioned above, disputes might occur due to the fact that in most of the family saga novels published in the Republic period the dominant family pattern is still the extended family. Lu Ling's *The Moneybag's Sons and Daughters* could be taken as an exception, in which almost all the children had left the father's house and established their own households in different cities; although Jiang Sanjie, the father, longed for his children to go home to visit him, they seldom did so.

Many researches have been done to explain why the Chinese family tended to be smaller since the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.). Based on Wang Shanjun's theory, from the Ming Dynasty's "*yitiaobian fa*" 一条鞭法 (single whip system) to the Qing Dynasty's "*tang ding ru mu*" 摊丁入亩 (to convey military service to taxes on land), the heavy apportion of taxes and military services in proportion to the size of the household and the amount of land was an important reason leading to the shrink of big and extended families (Wang, "Problems" 170). Industrialization was another reason, which meant that many laborers in the countryside would immigrate to the urban areas, so that the traditional family economy was damaged; for example, in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and the middle and lower reaches of the Yangze River, "among ten family-based textile enterprises, eight to nine had to be closed down" (Li, "*Source*" 328), and this

situation was also vividly described in Mao Dun's *Spring Silkworms* [Chuncan 春蚕]. The establishment of the Republican system declared the end of feudalism from a political and legal point of view. The New Law of the Republican government repealed the hereditary system, which implied that the root of patriarchal culture was removed, and it also legitimized the monogamy system and equality between men and women in financial and economic rights, which declared that the traditional patriarchal family had lost its legal protection (Li, "Changes" 27). At the same time, the democratic and nuclear family patterns were advocated as early as in the Westernization Movement started in the 1840s by intellectual officials as well as courtiers and continued by the elites in the 1911 Revolution, the New Culture Movement, and the May Fourth Movement. The slogan of that age was "The freedom of the whole population depends on the political revolution, while the freedom of the individual relies on the familial revolution" (Ding, "Women" 39; Li, "Changes" 26-27). "The familial revolution" meant the break-up of the feudal extended family.

Arguments about the advantages and disadvantages of the extended or nuclear families made up a small part of Zhang Henshui's *A Distinguished Family*. In Madam Jin's opinion, the nuclear family was "against the natural law, though it was fun" (Zhang, "*Distinguished*" 686); in the epilogue to the novel, Zhang Henshui himself stated that "the big family system was admittedly not good, for it might result in the production of parasites; however, the conjugal family system might also lead to the indifference and standoff among kinship members caused by the estrangement and individualism" (1029).

As more white-collar workers appeared during the Republican period, the conjugal or nuclear family was no longer a new concept; however, families, with several generations living under the same roof and united through the male dominating the female and the senior dominating the junior, were still the ideal and dominant family patterns described in the family saga novels; in every extended family there was unexceptionally a Master or Master-like man, who enjoyed the right to command and the authority to be obeyed; the interaction between family members and between the family and society were still regulated by a set of feudal ethical norms embodied in the Confucian classics. Ancestral worships were mentioned in almost all the family saga novels in this group, even in *The Yellow Storm*, the most revolutionary novel with a non-feudal and democratic Master, Old Man Qi, who was respected as a Patriarch by the inhabitants in the Little Sheep Fold. This forms another contrast between what had been portrayed in the novels and what the sociological statistics had revealed. In 1927, Pan Guangdan made a survey among 317 people. 85.5% demonstrated that they did not support ancestral worships, 72.6% suggested that ancestral worships should be abolished, and 81.5% thought that ancestors should be memorialized in some way but not in rituals (Pan 45-45). Similar statistics were exposed by another survey made by Zhou Shuzhao among university students in 1931, which concluded that among 188 students, 82.5 % objected to ancestral rituals and 71.7% suggested that ancestors should be memorialized but not in the form of worships or rituals (qtd. in Chen, "Change" 159).

The disparities as shown above might have many implications. First of all,

the extended family was representative of the feudal ideal of "yimen" 义门 (the household with four generations), so that the extended family had obtained its semiotic function - it represented the feudal system and ideology; secondly, it was easy for the author to inter-weave all the possible conflicts between generations, genders and ideologies through assigning different roles to the characters in a big family to let them have relationships and conflicts; and through the internal and external conflicts, the author realized his or her intention of explaining society, human nature, and history; thirdly, based on Wang Shanjun's theory, "from the Song to the Qing Dynasties, the families with four generations living under the same roof were quite prevalent. The Tang and Song Dynasties were not 'the peak time' for the extended families, nor did the extended families decline at the end of the Qing Dynasty, as popularly assumed; instead, they continued to develop" (Wang, "Problems" 168). That is to say extended families did exist in the Republican period. Wang further explained that the traditional ideologies of filiality, the bureaucratic need for the family to function as an economic and administrative organization, and the universal rule of "*qiong ze he, fu ze fen*" 穷则合、富则分 (poverty brings the family members together, while wealth leads to the break-up of the family) were all reasons for the development of the extended families. Lastly, there was usually a paradox in life that if something was highly advocated or propagandized, this thing might no longer exist or was hoped to be in existence. The extended family in this group of family saga novels, written at a time when the feudal system was collapsing but a new system had not been properly established, might have dual meanings: on the one hand, it was a

memorial to a once-existing glory that belonged to an empire, through the analogical relationship between the extended family and the imperial system; on the other hand, it was only through the collapse of this extended family that the demise of the feudal system could be visually and symbolically taken as true.

If the extended family was chosen as the efficient tool for the author to explore the relationship in the system, father-son conflict was an unavoidable topic to indicate that no matter how deep-rooted the feudal system was, the new revolutionary force and social progress would be irresistible; and the demise of the old and decadent system with its representative, the feudal Master, would be inevitable.

Contrary to Donzelot's theory, "fondness for [the] family is associated with a feeling for liberty" (52), the youth in the Republican period was leaving the family for liberty. The father-son conflict as a literary theme to reveal the incompatibility between the old and new ideologies was meta-fictionally pointed out in both *Family* and *Midnight*. In *Family*, Juehui felt that "he [the Venerable Master Gao] and he [Juehui] – the representative of the grandson's generation - could never see eye to eye" (Ba, "*Family*" 68). In *Midnight*, the Venerable Master Wu was configured first as a notorious son "in the conflict between Son and Father" but later a determined defender of Confucianism (Mao, "*Midnight*" 10); when his son Sunpu became a modern national capitalist, "the father-son conflict inevitably happened again between himself and Sunpu" (10). Although his transformation from a revolutionary figure to a defender of feudalism was dramatized as his falling off the horse, being half-paralyzed, and having to stay in

his study reading *The Tractate of the Most High on Actions and Consequences* for 25 years, the actual reason was the victory of the feudal system, which had paralyzed his ideology and personal will. The Venerable Master Wu's refusal to read any other books except for *The Tractate of the Most High on Actions and Consequences* could be interpreted as his determination to convert himself into a defender of feudalism - to become one of the puppets who "were making puppets out of others" (Ba, "*Family*" 254). Thus, this father-son conflict was also a display of the conflict between the personal will and the authoritative bureaucracy which called for the subordination of the individuals.

According to Franco Moretti, "youth is 'chosen' as the new epoch's 'specific material sign,' and it is chosen over the multitude of other possible signs because of its ability to accentuate modernity's dynamism and instability" (Moretti 5). In the case of China, the first large-scaled and turbulently-felt modernization movement was set in motion in the early twentieth century – though reforms to introduce western ideologies in constitution, education and industry had already been initiated in the 1840s. An examination of Chinese history shows that a unified enlightening and transforming role played by the youth in the change of social systems had never been so deeply felt except in the early twentieth century. Either physically as the carrier of western ideologies after returning back to China from their overseas studies, or as a newly produced class that had lost its priority in the abolishment of the official recruitment examination, the youth was pushed to the frontier of saving the country from the decadent feudal system and against the foreign aggressions.

The role of women was a complicated topic in the early twentieth century in China. Contrary to what had been advocated in various movements in the early twentieth century, women in this group of family saga novels were not portrayed in positive colors. Although "women's problems" had been called to attention by missionaries and reformers as early as in the late nineteenth century, the real time to change Chinese women's social status did not come until the early twentieth century, when large numbers of Chinese elites returned from overseas, full of western knowledge, ideologies and enthusiasm "to smash the old system and to build a new one". Although the presidency of the Republic quickly fell into the hands of Yuan Shikai, a dictator, Sun Yat-sen's "Three People's Principles" had thrown light on what a new, wealthy and democratic country should be like. Science, democracy, and equality were taken as the initiatives to construct a new, fair and progressive society; renovations in education and moral reforms were identified as the imperative precondition for those new ideas to go through a population overwhelmingly composed of illiterate peasants. Women, taken as the most spiritually imprisoned by gender codes, physically deformed by footbinding, and legally deprived through the provision that they had no right of inheritance, became the first to be emancipated.

Liang Qichao, the famous educator and one of the three leaders in the 1898 Hundred Days' Reform movement, declared as early as in 1897 that "due to the equality between men and women, the United States has become powerful; with the prevalence of women's education, Japan has become strong. In order to build a prosperous nation and an intelligent people, we have to start with women's

education" (Liang, "Suggestion" 52); Chen Duxiu, the leader of the New Culture and May Fourth Movements, claimed that "to respect women's personality and right is a practical need for social progress and we hope that the women themselves will be completely aware of their duties to society" (Chen, "Way" 7); Hu Shi, a well-known scholar who once separately received his educations from Cornell University and Columbia University and another leader of the New Culture and May Fourth Movements, charged that both Chinese men and women lacked independence, without which "a good society certainly cannot be created" (Hu, "American" 49); and Li Dazhao, a key person in the New Culture and May Fourth Movements, a famous professor in History at Peking University, and one of the founders of the Communist Party, declared that "without women's liberation, there can't be real democracy…therefore, democracy between the genders is our first and foremost task to achieve" (Li, "Women's" 28). Advocated and emphasized by these leading scholars and politicians, women's emancipation and participation in public affairs as a measure of civilization had entered their most activated and probably allegorized period in modern Chinese history.

By 1927 when the conflicts between the Communists and the Nationalists formally started, magazines and newspapers with "women" in their titles, as indicated below, thrived in large number, provoking in the public the consciousness of women in association with fairness, equality, progress and a new society – *Women's Journal* [Nüxue bao], *Woman* [Nübo], *Lectures on Women Studies* [Nüxue jangyi], *Chinese Women Reportedly* [Zhongguo nübao], *New Women in China* [Zhongguo xinnüjie], *Women Studies in Hubai* [Hubei nüxue

ribao], *Women Students* [Nüxuesheng], *Women Times* [Funü shibao], *Women's Right* [Nüquan], *Daily of Women Studies* [Nüxue ribao], *Lessons for Women* [Funü jian], *Women's World* [Nüzi shijie], *Women in the World* [Funü shijie], *Women Magazine* [Nüzi zazhi], *Chinese Women's World* [Zhonghua funüjie], *Women's Magazine* [Funü zazhi], *New Women* [Xin funü], *Women's Academic World* [Nü xuejie], *Women's Rights* [Nüquan], *Light for Women* [Funü zhiguang], *Women Youths* [Nü qingnian], *Women Every 10 Days* [Funü xunkan], *Women's Voice* [Nü sheng], and *New Women* [Xin nüxing].

Besides newspapers and magazines that advocated women's rights and individual values, schools and universities were built for women or opened to female students. Although the Qing government did not sanction schooling for girls until 1907 (Peterson, "*Education*" 348). the first indigenous women's school, Jingzheng Women's School, was founded in 1898 by Jin Yuanshan, Liang Qichao and several other radical reformers; in 1902, together with other members of the Chinese Educational Society, Cai Yuanpei, a scholar who was once educated in Germany and the principal of Peking University, founded the Patriotic Women's School in Shanghai; in 1904 a young female journalist, Lu Bicheng, opened the Beiyang Women's Public School in Tianjin; in 1905, Jingzhi Private Women's School was opened by Hou Hongjian and his wife. After the abolishment of the official recruitment examination in 1905, the Western-styled educations gained wider acceptance in China and expanded more rapidly than before. As more gentries, officials and educators advocated and sponsored to establish women's schools, properly trained teachers were in great demand.

Beiyang Women's Normal School, founded in early 1906 and later known as Zhili First Women's Normal School, timely met this acute shortage of women teachers. Its significance was compared by Han Tiyun to something that had never happened in the past 4000 years (qtd. in McElroy 354). It was reported in *The History of Modern Chinese Educational System* [Zhongguo jindai xuezhi shiliao 中国近代学制史料] that, from 1901 to 1908, there were more than twenty schools for girls and women opened in various provinces (Zhu, "Chart" 632-33). At the same time, women's physical education was also promoted to the height of national strengthening. With the development of anti-footbinding movements, Cai Yuanpei founded in 1916 the Institute of Physical Education, attached to the Patriotic Women's School in Shanghai; and Qin Xinhua, a female educator, opened the Physical Educational School of the North-South YMCA to achieve the goal that women should be physically strong enough, "not simply to ensure strong mothers for a strong nation, but to improve the quality of life of women themselves" (Fan, "Footbinding" 135, 129). This statement transmitted an analogical implication that women's physical as well as mental health had been associated with the self-strengthening and development of China.

However, contrary to all these political advocacies for women's liberation and political participation, women in this group of family saga novels were dimly portrayed. In Ba Jin's *Family*, Mingfeng, Mei, and Ruiyu were generally identified as the most representative sacrifices of the feudal patriarchal system in Chinese literature of the early twentieth century (Jin, "Broken" 36). Their tragedies had nothing to do with whether they were virtuous or evil, but decided

by the patriarchal and gender cultures. Mei and Juexin loved each other, but Mai's social position did not match Juexin's; in the end, they were separated from each other and Mei died of misery. Mingfeng, as the maiden servant of the Gao family, was married to Master Feng, who was old enough to be her grandfather, and she drowned herself. Ruiyu died from giving birth in a cold and deserted hut, because the time for her to give birth was in conflict with the time for the family to hold the funeral for the Venerable Master Gao, and she had to be moved out of the house for fear that her giving birth in the same house would bring bad luck to the dead person. Even though there were a couple of strong-willed and respected women in this group of family saga novels due to their "senior" positions, they had never had the power to say, such as Madam Jin in *A Distinguished Family* or Ruixuan's wife, Yunmei, in *The Yellow Storm*.

Besides this gallery of women who possessed all the expected virtues but were sacrificed by the system, there was another group of women, who were negatively associated with the degradation of morality or the deterioration of traditional ethics. Bai Xiuzhu, Miss Wu, Bai Lianhua and Bai Yuhua in *A Distinguished Family* were all playing around with men and living on men; Lin Peiyao, Lin Peishan and Xu Manli in *Midnight* all had emotional affairs or sexual relationships with different men; Big Red Pepper, Zhaodi and Qi Ruifeng's wife in *The Yellow Storm* were all snobbish and subservient, licking the Japanese' boots but bullying Chinese; Jin Suhen in *The Moneybag's Sons and Daughters* was portrayed as a typical femme fatale, beautiful, cunning and greedy. She was the direct reason for Jiang Weizu's death and the decline of the Jiang family.

Thus a paradox occurred. On the one hand, the reformers and political elites called for women's liberation and independence, but on the other hand, the writers of these family saga novels were still advocating traditional gender theories and ethics. It seems that they did accuse feudalism of its inhumanity in persecuting women physically as well as spiritually, especially through those codes embodied in *Four Books for Women* [Nü si shu 女四书]: "*bei*" 卑 (lowliness), "*ruo*" 弱 (meekness), "*shun*" 顺 (following), and "*rang*" 让 (yielding), but they also did not support the idea that women should get involved in politics or show their faces in public, which, in their eyes, meant the loss of order or deterioration of morality.

The reluctant attitude towards women's liberation expressed in this group of family saga novels was somewhat in agreement with the behavior of the government in the early Republican period. In 1907, a decree for opening girls primary schools was issued; however, its main concern was to "foster women's virtue and necessary knowledge and skills" (qtd. in Wang, "Women" 173); this decree also stipulated that "all the talk of indulging freedom, such as ending differentiation between men and women, granting freedom to choose one's mate, and allowing women to speak in political gatherings, should be strictly banned in order to maintain correct morals and manners" (173). In 1912 the Ministry of Education only adopted "a moderate position on women's schooling, introducing co-education at the lower elementary level but also decreeing that women be taught 'chastity and purity'" (Peterson, "Education" 361); in the same year, Yuan Shikai's Republican government declared that only men had the right to vote and to be elected; the head of Yuan's Ministry of Education declared that "women's

participation in administration and public affairs does not agree with women's physiology and China's basic conditions; women's natural commitment should be begetting children" (Li, "Growing" 80). Another example could fully reveal the official attitude towards women's social status. In dealing with a 1919 case, the Supreme Court ruled that the "purchase of a woman for the explicit purpose of begetting children is justifiable and not invalid" (qtd. in Freedman 330).

The negative attitudes from both the authors of the family saga novels and the Republican government towards women's liberation and participation in the public affairs were in conflict with the following two social surveys. According to Gan Nanyin, in 1922-1923, the percentage of those who favored free-choice marriage was 20% (Gan 29); in the 1930s, according to Chen Yunxi, the percentage had reached to 66.7% (qtd. in Chen, "Change" 54); and in the 1940s, free-choice marriage was very popular and the parents had completely lost their control over the marriages of their children (qtd. in Chen, "Change" 54); almost at the same time, in a survey made by Gan Nanyin in 1923, it was revealed that what made men most dissatisfied with their wives was their illiteracy, and 71% of the informants expressed their willingness to allow their wives to go out to serve society and communities, while only 11% preferred to have their wives stay at home.

1. 4 The Family Saga Novel as a Genre in the Republican Period

Manuals of divinations and political speeches, official records of events, and poetry were the earliest examples of Chinese writing. The great merits achieved

by the first empire in Chinese history: the unification of Chinese characters in the written form, the standardization of the units in currency and measurement, the construction of the merit system in the recruitment of military and government officials, and the establishment of taxation system in economy, had laid a solid foundation for the development of later empires. In the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.), "*fu*" 赋 (rhyme prose), with its emphasis on rhetorical and lexical skills, was developed and became the symbol of literary achievement. By the time of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.), "*shi*" 诗 (poetry) gradually dominated the literary scene, and the Song Dynasty (960-1276 A.D.) witnessed the rise and perfection of another literary genre, "*ci*" 词 (ci lyric). With the establishment of the Great Yuan Empire (1279-1368 A.D.), the Mongols' extensive contacts in western Asia and Europe led to the booming of international trades and the exchange of different cultures; literature took on a more vernacular and entertaining aspect: "*qu*" 曲 (drama) was developed, and its popularity continued into the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.), whose emperors had developed a powerful and systemized maritime commerce, which further facilitated the contacts between China and Europe. The pragmatic and scientific elements were emphasized in the knowledge system in the Ming Dynasty. Li Shizheng's pharmaceutical book *Compendium of Materia Medica* [Bencao gangmu 本草纲目], Song Yingxing's handicraft book *Heavenly Creations* [Tiangong kaiwu 天工开物], Xu Guangqi's agricultural book *Complete Treatise on Agriculture* [Nongzheng quanshu 农政全书] and Xu Xiake's geographic book *Travels of Xu Xiake* [Xu Xiake youji 徐霞客游记] were

published in the early and middle period of the Ming Dynasty, and an unprecedented encyclopedia *The Encyclopedia of Yongle Emperor's Reign in Ming Dynasty* [Yongle dadian 永乐大典] was completed in 1404.

Fiction was not highly credited in ancient China. In his discussion on early Chinese literature, Burton Watson classified it into three categories: history, philosophy, and poetry. The term "*xiao shuo*" 小说 (fiction) first appeared in *Zhuang Zi* [Zhuang Zi 庄子] but its meaning is far different from the generic definition of fiction in modern literary dictionaries. It mainly refers to "trivial talks" or "street gossips" (qtd. Fang "*Brief*" 8). When Huan Tan's *The Collection of Literary Works* [Wen Xuan 文选] was written in the Han Dynasty, literary criticism on fiction could be regarded as formally shaped. In *The Collection of Literary Works*, Huan Tan for the first time in Chinese literary history had systematically discussed the features of fiction: its content derived from fragmented street talks; its narrative forms were stories, parables and legends with the purpose to illuminate something; its style was normally short; and its social effect was enlightening and facilitative to the administration of society and self-cultivation (qtd. Fang "*Brief*" 11).

Due to its "apocryphal nature", Chinese fiction was created and accepted as the fillers of the void left by the official history. Stories that can roughly be labeled as supernatural fiction and anecdotal fiction were written in the Wei-Jin Period and the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420 A.D.–589 A.D.). The representative works are Wang Jia's *Records of Gleanings* [Shi Yi Ji 拾遗记], Liu

Yiqing's *Records of the Netherworld* [You Ming Lu 幽明录], Cao Pi's *Records of Ghosts and Quaintness* [Lie Yi Zhuan 列异记], and Gan Bao's *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Records* [Sou Shen Ji 搜神记]. They were written in "wenyan wen" 文言文 (literary language), short and simple, and sometimes without plot, and they were merely recordings of legendary characters or events and often associated with the supernatural world. In both *The Chronicle of the Sui Dynasty* [Sui Zhi 隋志] and *The Chronicle of the Old Tang Dynasty* [Jiutang Zhi 旧唐志], the above mentioned fictional works were listed under the category of "History", which was meant unofficial history in that context. This aesthetic ideology or genre categorization was further developed by Liu Zhiji in his *Introduction to History* [Shi Tong 史通], which was also written in the Tang Dynasty. *Introduction to History* was commonly recognized as the first treatise on the recognization of fiction as a literary genre. Ten categories were listed under this genre: unofficial history; brief recordings of things in life; anecdotes; trivial talks; county chorography; family history; privately compiled biography; miscellany; geography; and town book (qtd. Fang "*Brief*" 15). According to this categorization, "family history", "unofficial history", and "privately compiled biography" were identified to share similar literary inclinations.

The maturity of fiction written in the literary language came with "*tang chuanqi*" 唐传奇 (Tang Legend). The concept of literary creation began to be emphasized in both the subject matter and writing style, which means that the plot tended to be complete and literary creation had replaced simple recordings or

imitations. When "*hua ben*" 话本 (the prompt-book or notes for the oral narration of stories/tales) appeared in the Song Dynasty, fiction written in "chuantong baihua" 传统白话 (the traditional vernacular language) began to shape, out of which "*zhanghui xiaoshuo*" 章回小说 (chaptered novel) was gradually developed and had obtained a good market. Although some literary theorists or historians suggested that the earliest vernacular narratives were "*bianwen*" 变文 (literally, "transformation text") found in Dunhuang caves and identified as appearing in the early Tang Dynasty, more scholars and experts argued that the transformation texts could not be counted as literary works in a strict sense, because they were, mostly, fragmented phrases and sentences. When it was the Ming Dynasty, chaptered novels achieved prominence and distinguished themselves through the following masterpieces: *The Pilgrimage to the West*, *The Water Margin*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms,* and *Golden Lotus.*

The success of Golden Lotus brought the traditional Chinese novel into its zenith until the early twentieth century. Besides the vivid description of sex, power struggles and daily lives which were the characteristics of Golden Lotus, more critical and sentimental elements were introduced in the following outstanding novels created in the Qing Dynasty, with the intension to expose the darkness of the bureaucratic system, the greediness of human nature, and the tragedies of lower societies, especially the prostitutes and actresses: *The Scholars* [Ruilin waishi 儒林外史] (Wu Jingzi, 1750), *A Dream of Red Mansions* (Cao Xueqin, 1784), and *Mirror for Flowers* [Pinhua baojian 品花宝鉴] (Chen Sen,

1835); from 1902 to 1907, the following political novels were serialized in fictional magazines and gradually earned the reputation of "Late Qing Reprimanding Fictions": *Strange Events Witnessed in Twenty Years* [Ershinian mudu zhi guai xianzhuang 二十年目睹之怪现状] (Wu Yanren, 1903-1905), *The Travels of Lao Can* [Laocan youji 老残游记] (Liu E, 1903-1906), *The Bureaucrats* [Guanchang xianxing ji 官场现形记] (Li Boyuan, 1903-1906), and *A Flower in the Sinful Sea* [Nie hai hua 孽海花] (Jin Songcen, Cen Pu, 1903-1907). Judging from the content of these popular novels, "shi yan zhi" 诗言志 (poetry expresses will) advocated in *Classic of History* [Shang Shu 尚书] and "shi yuan qing" 诗源情 (delicacy and beauty of poetry comes from emotion) emphasized by Lu Ji in his *On Rhyme Prose* [Wen Fu 文赋] were still the yardsticks for literary creation; however, the moral and political functions of literature were more emphasized in the early twentieth century.

When the military and commercial power of the West rendered China into a process of Westernization or modernization, press culture and the entertainment industry in Shanghai, Beijing and port cities were developed at an amazing speed. Printing facilitated the birth of a new urban reading public, who contributed to "a miraculous re-flowering" of Chinese fiction "around the turn of the century... About 1100 volumes of fiction (novels or short-story collections) were published at this time, as compared with a total of little more than 300 in the previous seven centuries" (Zheng 392). Mandarin Duck and Butterfly fiction was an un-neglected contributor in the formation of this tide of popularization of fiction, which,

according to Perry Link, had reflected a growing commercial interest on the part of press owners and a growing preference for entertainment among readers, whose bewilderment toward the introduction of modern lifestyles and mores produced a psychological need for relief and leisure. Mandarin Duck and Butterfly fictions were mostly modeled on *A Dream of Red Mansions* or the "talent-beauty" novels prevalent in the mid-nineteenth century, such as *Six Talented Men* [Liu caizi 六才子] or *Vestiges of Flowers and Moonlight* [Hua yue hen 花月痕]. These popular novels "catered, in fact, to prurient interests and came to be known as 'guides to brothels', since the 'beauties' in these works with whome the talented dandies became infatuated are invariably courtesans" (Fairbank 461).

With the publication of *Fiction Forest* [Xiaoshuo lin 小说林] in 1907, the political and reprimanding novels began to be neglected and the function of fiction in national salvation advocated by Liang Qichao and his followers was challenged by Huang Moxi in his foreword to *Fiction Forest* upon its publication:

> Every novel claims that it is making a great contribution to the progress of the nation, and every review tries to spotlight its purpose of reforming social customs...even the laws of the state, the canons of religion, the textbooks used in school, the code of behavior in the family and society are all said to depend on fiction. Can this be true? (qtd. in Zhao, "Uneasy" 22)

Instead, the aesthetic aspect and the entertaining purpose of fiction were emphasized by *Huang* and his followers, whose theory was further strengthened by the publication of Fiction Times [Xiaoshuo shibao 小说时报] in 1908 and *Fiction Monthly* [Xiaoshuo yuebao 小说月报] in 1910. Due to the commercial purpose of these publications and the rapidly modernized lifestyle of their readers, more magazines and newspapers for leisure fiction appeared, such as *Fiction Newspapers* [Xiaoshuo congbao 小说丛报] and the literary supplements in newspapers, such as *Saturday* [Libai liu 礼拜六], *Red Roses* [Hong meigui 红玫瑰], and *Joy Forest* [Kuaihuo lin 快活林] in 1914, *Fiction Panorama* [Xiaoshuo daguan 小说大观] in 1915, and *Fiction Pictorial* [Xiaoshuo huabao 小说画报] in 1917, which had greatly contributed to the flourishing of romantic and sentimental fictions represented by Mandarin Duck and Butterfly fictions and other stories concerning topics popular in urban lives, such as political and brothel scandals, crimes of the underworld, and overseas adventures. According to Perry Link, there were three waves of leisure fiction at the turn of the twentieth century and before the end of the 1920s: romances before 1910, scandal and detective novels between 1910 and 1920, and martial-art novels in the late 1920s (Link, "Mandarin" 53). The decline of leisure fiction and a more politicized fiction had a close relationship with the May Fourth Movement and the national crisis caused by domestic fights among warlords and international wars and unfair treaties.

Stylistically the family saga novels published in the Republican period could be taken as in the transition from "*wenyan wen xiaoshuo*" 文言文小说 (fiction

written in literary language) or "chuantong baihua xiaoshuo" 传统白话小说 (fiction written in traditional vernacular language) to "*xiandai baihua xiaoshuo*" 现代白话小说 (fiction written in modern vernacular language) and thematically from the entertainment or leisure fiction to the political or revolutionary fiction, and Zhang Henshui's *A Distinguished Family* in this group of family saga novels has typically represented this transition. It still retained the form of the chaptered novel: the narration was sequenced in chapters with a couplet as the title for each chapter, giving the gist of its content; dreams and the Taoist emptiness were still the dominant themes in this novel to show Zhang's disillusion with the collapse of the old imperial system and the anxiety over the uncertain fates of both the nation and the individuals in an age of turbulence and transformations; the traditional narrative paradigm of narratological directions was continued in this novel and realized in the forms of "prologue" and "epilogue", explaining who the author was and how the story came into being; however, the traditional narratorial intrusions, such as "If you think this too trivial or vulgar, Gentle readers, you had better put this book down and choose one more to your liking" (Cao, "Dream" 115), had almost completely disappeared; poetry, which was usually taken as the basic skill and test for a highly credited literate in a traditional sense, occupied a considerable percentage in this novel, such as the poems written by Leng Qingqiu, Jin Yanxi, and the members of Yanxi's Poetry Society; *A Dream of Red Mansions* was often mentioned by the characters in many chapters and some plots were obviously borrowed from *A Dream of Red Mansions*. One such example is the relationship between Yanxi and the chambermaid Xiaolian, which was teased by

Yanxi's sister-in-law as the relationship between Jia Baoyu and his chambermaids in *A Dream of Red Mansions*:

> Yanxi answered in smile: "Elder sister-in-law is teasing me. I am not Master Baoyu in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, needing the unmarried girls to wait on me. Only one sentence of what you said is enough for our father to blame me. Actually, you are mistaken. I am not only kind to Xiaolian but also to Yu'er and Qiuxiang. Because they are all pathetic I can't order them around as if they were old ahmas or man-servants. (Zhang, "*Distinguished*" 88)

However, in this novel, Yanxi was the son of a Republican Prime Minister, wearing Western suits, reading English magazines, and talking about capitalism and night-club girls, while Baoyu was the young master of a huge feudal family, forced to read classics for the feudal officialdom and dressed up in the royal costumes:

> a golden coronet studded with jewels and a golden chaplet in the form of two dragons fighting for a pearl. His red archer's jacket, embroidered with golden butterflies and flowers, was tied with a colored tasseled palace sash [...] his court boots were of black satin with white soles. (Cao, "*Dream*" 60)

These plots demonstrated how China's social progress and Westernization had affected literary aesthetics. It indicated that the change of content was faster than narratological conventions, and this point could be illuminated by what Xu Nianci, the editor of *Fiction Forest*, wrote in his "My View on Fiction" [Wode xiaoshuo guan 我的小说观]: "I insist that writers and translators publish books, [specifically written] for these shop assistants on thin paper with Chinese bindings, with chapter-divisions of Chinese style, in vernacular language" (qtd. in Zhao, "Uneasy" 20); this negotiation between form and content was also meta-fictionally embodied in Madam Jin's talk to Leng Qingqiu on the merits or disadvantages of the conjugal families in *A Distinguished Family*:

> I insist on the combination of the old and the new and the Western and the Chinese. In public, all the norms and codes should be followed but in private the affective side of the familial life should also be emphasized. (Zhang, "*Distinguished*" 636)

In this regard, Hu Shi's "Reform of Literature" and Chen Duxiu's "Literary Revolution" were both the result of and a spur to the social transformation, which could be illuminated by the flowing aspects: 1) a more effective communication between and among the literati and the populace became urgent as the national alertness increased to the accelerated military and economic aggression from the foreign powers; 2) the development and marketization of media and cultural business promoted the use of the daily vernacular language; and in 1920, by the

decree of the Ministry of Education, the vernacular language was officially introduced as the instruction language in the first and second grades of elementary schools; 3) the vernacular language was the only vehicle for reformers and patriotic writers to pass on their enlightening ideas to the uneducated people, who probably composed more than 80% of the population at that time; 4) the introduction of Western ideologies needed corresponding terms and languages to translate, which were absent from traditional Chinese language, for example, "de xiansheng" 德先生 representing "democracy", "sai xiansheng" 赛先生 standing for "sicence", "modeng nülang" 摩登女郎 referring to "modern girls", and "bashi" 巴士 representing "bus". Therefore, the vernacularization and expending of the literary language not only concerned the change of literary aesthetics, ranging from the layout of the narrative structure to the word choice, but also the functions and pragmatic purposes of literature. In this respect, Qian Xingcun (A Ying)'s comments were quite relevant:

> The Chinese language has been the language of Confucian morality and Taoist superstition…is absolutely unfit for a new era of the twentieth century. Let me boldly repeat my manifesto: to the end that China may not perish and may become a civilized nation of the twentieth century, the basic task is to abolish Confucianism and annihilate Taoism. But the destruction of the Chinese written language, which has served as the repository of Confucian morality and Taoist superstition, is a prerequisite for the accomplishment of this task. (qtd. in Hsia, "*History*" 10)

Since Ba Jin's *Family*, the social and moral functions of literature were more emphasized. Compared with the traditional family saga novels, the following literary characteristics were roughly shared by the family saga novels published in the Republican period:

Language was more vernacular compared with *Golden Lotus* or *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Either due to the lack of traditional training in rhetorical and lexical skills, or for the purpose of popularization, the writers after the May Fourth Movement did not seem to have paid very much attention to the linguistic refinement produced by rhyme, tone, antonyms, synonyms, or proverbs. Guo Moruo once declared his contempt for narrative conventions. He said that "I am a man who hates form most, and I have never been attentive to form. The things I have written are only random dancing acted out totally on impulse" (qtd. in Zhao, "*Uneasy*" 34). In the end, "the vernacular was refined by the May Fourth writers to such a degree and used so effectively for all genres that the literary language finally became obsolete and was pushed into disuse" (Hsia, "*History*" 185). In Lao She's *The Yellow Storm*, such humorous, colloquial and local-colored sentences as the followings were quite prevalent and persistent: "Eastern Sun's face worked and he ran his eyes up into his forehead and back down again…he said '…you don't match teeth and lips with me'" (Lao, "*Yellow*" 154).

Some Western rhetoric devices were adopted in this group of family saga novels. The quotation mark was a good example. As already discussed in this dissertation, most of the traditional Chinese novels "retained unmistakable signs of the storyteller's tale" (Hightower 120), and, therefore, dialogues among

characters were mainly carried out through the role-plays of the story teller. When the novels were written in the "written vernacular language", character focalization became the most popular rhetorical device to differentiate speakers engaged in the dialogues or to open new views of observations; what a character said or thought was usually reported by the narrator from the character's point of view, which obviously had been reiterated by the narrator. This was typical of the narrative strategy adopted in *A Dream of Red Mansions* and all traditional and classical literary works; and even in Ba Jin's *Family*, this literary device was still visible. For example, in *Family*, the persistent third-person narrative was often changed into the first-person narrative through the focalization on the character's diary or mental/psychological activities. This complexity caused by the differentiation of subjectivity was confusing, especially when more than one speech was reported in a single paragraph. This problem was solved by the adoption of quotation marks from the Western literature. The quotation marks were used to distinguish direct and indirect speeches, so that the ambiguity in differentiating the speeches through focalization was avoided.

Class consciousness was more emphasized in this group of family saga novels, though in both *Golden Lotus* and *A Dream of Red Mansions* it was a subsidiary theme, dominating interpersonal relationships. In *A Distinguished Family*, Leng Qingqiu attributed the failure of her marriage with Jin Yanxi to the latter's wealthy birth and coxcomb lifestyle; in *Family*, Mingfeng never dared to be considered as a match for the third young master, because of her maiden status; and in *The Yellow Storm*, Master Qi dismayed at the idea that his third grandson

had frequent contacts with the second daughter of Mr. Guan who was rich, vulgar and snobbish.

Sexual descriptions, which occupied a large proportion in *Golden Lotus* and *A Dream of Red Mansions*, disappeared from this group of family saga novels. Under the spirit that "literature was the best means to revolutionize the nation and change the spirit of the people" (Lu, "*Selected Works*" 3), moral education was legitimized in literary works; eroticism or even the description of intimacies was criticized in the same manner as the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly fiction was mocked and defamed by the revolutionary writers, who would criticize any writer failing to advocate for social reforms or to criticize social evils; even humor had "to be eschewed because in the eyes of the Left-wing critics it produced frivolous literature" (Vohra 61). Lin Yutang and Lao She were both once criticized by Lu Xun for their humorous crafts (61, 97).

The plot that every extended patriarchal family had three sons was an outstanding feature with this group of family saga novels. The eldest son, such as Juexin in *Family*, Ruixuan in *The Yellow Storm*, and Weizu in *The Moneybag's Sons and Daughters*, was usually the product of the Confucian code. He was docile and self-cultivated, taking the responsibility of supporting the family as his priority and setting up models for the younger generation. The second son, such as Juemin in *Family*, Ruifeng in *The Yellow Storm*, and Shaozu in *The Moneybag's Sons and Daughters*, was usually pendulous and spineless, taking advantage of the situation and benefiting himself even at the sacrifice of relatives or principles. The third son, like Juehui in *Family*, Ruiquan in *The Yellow Storm*, Chunzu in *The*

Moneybag's Sons and Daughters, and even Yanxi in *A Distinguished Family*, was usually the fighter against the old and decadent system, representing the progressive force and promising a better future. As to the literary function of this pattern, Ba Jin once frankly stated that "I had three brothers in *Family*, Juexin, Juemin and Juehui; they represented three different personalities and ends" (Ba, "*My*" 131).

The traditional paradigm of polarization in the layout of the whole story structure, such as joy and sorrow, union and separation, yin and yang, stillness and movement, and prosperity and decline, which had been manipulated with expertise in *Gold Lotus*, *A Dream of Red Mansions* and many other classical works, were still in practice in the family saga novels selected in this group; however, the dynamic relationship between the following polarized worlds, which had once earned great credit for the classical Chinese literature - the communication and interchangeability between the mortal and the immortal, human beings and non-human beings, and reality and dream/fantasy - was completely discarded by the writers in this group of family saga novels. The religious dimension of emptiness emphasized in *Golden Lotus* and *A Dream of Red Mansions* was neglected or replaced by the Communist view that history developed in the linear-stages-of-growth model.

Realism dominated almost all the family saga novels produced after the May Fourth Movement, when Marxist historical materialism was combined with the Chinese tradition of "*Junzi yi yan you wu*" 君子以言有物 (there should be substance in writing and speech / if you write, you write something worthwhile

and trustworthy) or Bai Juyi's "*wenzhang he weishi er zhu, geshi he weishi er zuo*" 文章合为时而著，歌诗合为事而作 (Essays should be written to reflect contemporary issues, and poems are inspired by real events) (qtd. in Yan, "Two" 32).

The traditional analogy between the family and the nation was continued and renovated in the allegory that the decline and collapse of the extended family represented the demise of feudalism and the ancient imperial system.

Characters were usually portrayed with politically oriented colors and their behaviors could normally be predicted even before their actions really took place. This writing technique was actually the rehearsal of the ancient poetic paradigms started by *The Spring and Autumn Annals* [Chuqiu 春秋] and *The Chronicle of Zuo* [Zuo zhuan 左传], in which prominent events were chronologically recorded in a systematic and concrete manner; and characters were stereotyped based on the Confucian moral standards; for example, rulers were polarized as either virtuous and capable or evil and stupid; ministers were either wise and loyal or treacherous and ambitious; and women were either selfless and farsighted or selfish and calamitous. This traditional literary aesthetics was basically lost in *Golden Lotus* and *A Dream of Red Mansions* due to their eroticism and religious advocacy of retribution or emptiness, which was somewhat contradictory to Confucian ethical codes. When moral instructions were re-emphasized as the writers' commitment in the enlightening movements in the early twentieth century, this literary aesthetics flourished again.

If, literarily, the first half of the twentieth century could be characterized by

such literary trends as vernacular fiction, May Fourth fiction, revolutionary fiction, and proletarian fiction, most of the features of these fictions had been embodied in the family saga novels selected in this group. Except for a vague insistence on the dedication of one's self to a righteous cause and a widely spread anxiety caused by the national crisis and political turmoil, no orthodox styles or themes were formed. Compared to the writers in Mao's era, the writers of the early twentieth century had basically realized their autonomy in expressing their own ideologies in both literary aesthetics and political stands.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FAMILY SAGA NOVELS IN MAO'S ERA

2.1 Historical Background

Long before the establishment of the PRC, Mao Zedong realized that it was the land problem rather than gender inequality that was the key to save China from imperial aggressions and feudal corruptions.

China was an agrarian country from the very beginning. According to the statistics provided by the National Statistical Bureau of China, in 1949 the number of employees in cities and towns was 1.533 million, only 8.5% of the total. It was not hard to imagine how big the rural population was when Mao Zedong and his followers started the Communist revolution and the socialist construction afterwards. Therefore, if the core of feudal exploitation – the private ownership of land and the land tenure system - was not abolished, no national innovation or transformation could be seriously achieved in China.

As Mahatma Gandhi realized that home economy ('swadeshi') was the most efficient way to resist the British colonization of the Indian economy, Mao Zedong realized that for the illiterate, selfish and narrow-minded Chinese peasants, the possession of land or the promise of enough food was the engine for them to take actions to overthrow the exploiting class and turn upside down the social system, in which they were trodden to the bottom. After two months' on-the-spot investigations in the rural areas of Human province, Mao Zedong published his *Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan* [Hunan nongmin yundong kaocha

baogao 湖南农民运动考察报告] in 1927, clearly pointing out:

> the patriarchal-feudal class of local tyrants, evil gentry and lawless landlords has formed the basis of autocratic government for thousands of years and is the cornerstone of imperialism, warlordism and corrupt officialdom. To overthrow these feudal forces is the real objective of the national revolution. In a few months the peasants have accomplished what Dr. Sun Yat-sen wanted but failed to accomplish in the forty years he devoted to the national revolution…a great change in the countryside. The Revolution of 1911 did not bring about this change, hence its failure. (Mao, "Selected…First" 27).

Together with "Analysis of All Classes in China" [Zhongguo ge jieji fenxi 中国各阶级分析] published in December 1925 in *Revolution* [Geming 革命], this "*Report*" re-emphasized the importance of class division and the decisive role of the peasants in the revolution.

In October 1927 Mao Zedong and his followers established the first rural revolutionary base in Jingangshan and thereafter carried out the movement of "*da tuhao, fen tiandi*" 打土豪, 分田地 (to knock down the local tyrants and to divide the land). In December 1928, *Jinggangshan Land Law* [Jinggangshan tudi fa 井冈山土地法] was published by Mao's Soviet government, with its first item providing that each person of whatever age and gender enjoy the equal right to the

distribution of land. The revolutionary passion was thus stimulated among the peasants; and they became the main force of Mao's revolution. In December 1931, *Land Law of the Chinese Soviet Republic* [Zhongguo suweiai gongheguo tudi fa中国苏维埃共和国土地法] was published. The first item was:

> All the land of the feudal landlords, despotic gentry, warlords, and bureaucrats, as well as other big private owners, regardless of whether they manage it themselves or rent it out, is to be confiscated without any compensation. The confiscated land will be redistributed to the poor and middle peasants by the Soviets. The former landowners whose land has been confiscated have absolutely no right to participate in the land redistribution. Farm laborers, coolies, and toiling peasants, regardless of sex, have the same right to land distribution. (Mao, "Land" 822)

Soon after this *Land Law* was published, Mao's government launched the movement of land investigation and measurement in 1932, which lasted until 1934. In order to establish an anti-Japanese united front, in February 1937, the central committee of the Communist Party changed the policy of confiscating the land of the landlords into reducing the rates of rent and interest, so as to unite every possible force during the period of the Resistance War (1937-1945). When the Resistance War ended and the New Democracy Revolution started, the central committee of the Communist Party published on 4 May 1946 "Instructions on the Land Problems of Settling Accounts and Reducing Rents" [Guanyu qingsuan

jianzu ji tudi wenti de zhishi 关于清算减租及土地问题的指示]. It changed the policy of reducing the rates of rent and interest into confiscating the land of the landlords and distributing them to the peasants. This project was actually "a movement of the peasants to eliminate the landlords as a class and to make the soil their own" (Chen, "Land Reform" 81). In October 1947, *Outline of the Land Law of China* [Zhongguo tudi fa dagang中国土地法大纲] was published, declaring the end of the feudal land tenure system.

After the PRC was founded, in order to meet the requirements of the new situation, the *Land Reform Law of the People's Republic of China* [Zhonghua Renming Gongheguo Tugai Fa 中华人民共和国土改法] was published in June 1950, which, under the guidance of Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, was to abolish the inheritance and property right to the land and allocate all rents from the land for the public purposes. In 1952 the Land Reform Movement was completed, and at the same time "*huzhu zu*" 互助组 (mutual-aid teams) appeared in rural areas. Peasants pooled their lands, tools and draught animals in the mutual-aid teams, which actually declared the inauguration of the public ownership of land and large farm implements. At the same time, the enterprises of former national capitalists were advised to become joint state-and-privates after the industrial and commercial properties of the bureaucratic capitalists had been gradually confiscated after the PRC was founded. In this way, the private economy was uprooted, and so was the basic condition for the existence of the family kinship system.

The family was no longer a self-sustaining economic and political institution,

characteristic of the feudal society. Agricultural co-ops and collective farms were gradually set up in rural areas, and so were labor unions in the socialist factories, which all led to the sublimation of comrade relationships, egalitarianism and proletarian brotherhood. The family had been transferred from a functional economic unit to simply a biological unit identified by the surname or ancestor lineage. Education and criticism were carried out among family members to help achieve a pure and thorough revolutionary ideology. Mao Zedong was compared to "the reincarnated parent of the laboring people" and Mao Zedong proclaimed to let "the laboring people to be the Master of the nation" (Miners 79); in either case, the nation was compared to a big family and Mao Zedong became the ultimate Patriarch. In this "big family", all social, political and economic forces should be bound up and concentrated in the central government represented by Mao Zedong, and all provincial and local officials were appointed by the central government rather than elected by the local citizens. Thus a hierarchical and vertical system was established: the central government was at the top and the village and town government was at the bottom, intermediated by the municipal government. The result was the increase of the enterprises directly under the central management and the shrink of the local autonomy and budgetary expenditure of the local governments; for example, in 1953 there were only 2800 enterprises under the central management, but in 1957 the number had been increased to 9300, and the total budgetary expenditure of the central government occupied 81%, with only 19% left for the local governments (Li, "Exploration" 82). This hierarchical relationship between Mao Zedong and the whole families in the nation and

between the central government and the local governments was vividly illuminated by Zhao Suisheng in the following statement:

> The nation's economy was like an extended traditional family economy. The central authority was Jiazhang (family head), who was responsible for the livelihood of the whole family and controlled all family resources. Local governments were like Haizi (children) in the family, who were looked after by their Jiazhang. They were expected to work hard for the prosperity of the family and contribute their income to the family pool. (Zhao, "China's" 19)

Under these circumstances, everyone was stimulated to be contributive and actively engaged in the political arena. At the same time, various political caps might be waiting for them if they did not make enough effort: 1) "*jieji diren*" 阶级敌人 (class enemies), including former landlords, rich peasants, capitalists or any others from wealthy backgrounds, 2) "*fangeming fenzi*" 反革命分子 (anti-revolutionaries), referring to those who did not follow the right ideological line, 3) "*huai fenzi*" 坏分子 (bad elements), indicating the convicted criminals, 4) "*luohou fenzi*" 落后分子 (behindhand elements), including those who did not follow the revolutionary line closely, and 5) "*youpai*" 右派 (rightists), referring to those who were conservative on the road to socialist construction. This "class-labeling system" was developed from the efforts of the Communists in the 1930s

to separate the exploiting class from the exploited one. After the Communists dominated in the late 1940s and early 1950s, all villagers were assigned "*jiating chengfen*" 家庭成分 (family class-background labels), based on a family's average economic position over the three years preceding the Land Reform Movement: individuals were classified as "*dizhu*" 地主 (landlords), "*funong*" 富农 (rich/well-off peasants), "*shang zhongnong*" 上中农(upper-middle peasants), "*zhongnong*" 中农 (middle peasants), or "*xia zhongnong*" 下中农 (lower-middle peasants), "*pinnong*" 贫农 (poor peasants), or "*gunong*" 雇农 (hired laborers). The situation was summarized by Eugene T. Murphy in the following statement, "The measure of a family's potential shifted from one that depended on access to land, labor, tools, and the symbolic capital needed for a strong, diversified family economy to one in which relative advantage amounted simply to the phase of family development in which the domestic group found itself and the new symbolic capital encoded in one's class label" (Murphy 224). These class labels defined a new hierarchy; and the value of the family was basically replaced by such collective units: the mutual-aid team, the co-op, the production brigade, and the commune, all of which called for the selfless contribution of the families to the construction of the socialist country. Anyone who was labeled as "bad" would be the victims of political campaigns and deprived of the basic human rights. Physical tortures were common because the authorities encouraged revolutionaries to attack the "bad classes", and such attacks were taken as measures of allegiance to the Communist regime. The eagerness of all citizens to show their loyalty to Mao's line was either out of a sincere faith in the correct

leadership of Mao Zedong and his Communist Party or out of the "fear of being dismissed from one's post; the fear of being expelled from the party; the fear of being divorced by one's wife; the fear of serving a prison term; and the fear of being beheaded" (Chung, "Reappraising" 49).

Compared with the early twentieth century, when the literary creation was greatly influenced and oriented by humanism, naturalism, anarchism, or individualism introduced from the West, Mao's era could be more defined as "sterile" in literature, due to Mao's cautious or negative attitude towards intellectuals and his rigid political guidance in literary and artistic creations. Against such historical background, there were still some worthwhile novels published in the 1950s: *Sanliwan* [Sanliwan 三里湾] (Zhao Shuli, 1955), *The Builders* [Chuangye shi 创业史] (Liu Qing, 1957), *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* [Linhai xueyuan 林海雪原] (Qu Bo, 1957), *Keep the Red Flag Flying* [Hongqi pu 红旗谱] (Liang Bin, 1957), *The Red Sun* [Hong ri 红日] (Wu Qiang, 1957), *Tempered Steel* [Bai lian cheng gang 百炼成钢] (Ai Wu, 1957), *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* [Shaniang jubian 山乡巨变] (Zhou Libo, 1957-1960), *The Song of the Youth* [Qingchun zhi ge 青春之歌] (Yang Mo, 1958), *Morning in Shanghai* [Shanghai de zaochen 上海的早晨] (Zhou Erfu, 1958), *Three-Family Lane* [Sanjia xiang 三家巷] (Ouyang Shan, 1959), *Red Crag* [Hongyan 红岩] (Luo Guangbin and Yang Yiyan, 1960), and *Changes in the Past Sixty Years* [Liushinian de bianqian 六十年的变迁] (Li Liuru, 1957). Among them, the following family saga novels will be discussed.

2.2 The Textualization of the Family in the Family Saga Novels

2. 2.1 Zhao Shuli's *Sanliwan*

Zhao Shuli's *Sanliwan* focused on the socialist activities of developing mutual-aid teams and the co-ops. The story was set in one month, starting with the technical problems that the villagers had to solve in building irrigation canals and ending in the solution of all problems faced by the villagers in the construction of the mutual-aid teams. In such a short time, all the possible political, economic, emotional, and generational conflicts that emerged in the socialist reformation movement were demonstrated through the entangling relationships among four families, headed respectively by Wang Jinsheng, the Branch Secretary of the Communist Party in the village; Fan Gaodeng, the village head; Ma Duoshou, a well-off peasant; and Yuan Tiancheng, a Communist Party member. The older generation was portrayed as the one with backward ideologies of small peasant economies and thus the target for the younger generation to educate and remold. Fan Lingzhi and Ma Youyi made an agreement behind their fathers to carry out a competition to "cure" their fathers' "illness", which was their unwillingness to join the mutual-aid teams. The reason that the younger generation was more progressive was obvious - because they were members of the Communist Youth League. In the end, Lingzhi "began to feel satisfied with her father" when he signed up to join the mutual-aid teams, pulled down his grocery booth and stopped borrowing money to do private business in the daytime and settle accounts deep into the night (Zhao, "*Sanliwan*" 136).

The free-choice marriage was overtly advocated; for example, Youyi

violently resisted the arranged marriage made by his mother. Different from the tradition of "*fumu zhi ming, meishuo zhiyan*" 父母之命，媒说之言 (the engagement should be facilitated by matchmakers and marriages should be decided by parents), free-choice marriages became the fashion. Young people in *Sanliwan* were not only emotionally choosing their own mates but also politically using the Communist aesthetics to justify their choices. Lingzhi's weight-balance between the two potential candidates was quite illuminating:

> Yusheng has a capable father, an affable mother, a Communist brother, and a hardworking sister-in-law, whereas Youyi has a spineless father, a feudal and autocratic mother, a financially wizard brother and an aggressive sister-in-law. …however, Yusheng is uneducated, whereas Youyi is educated…but if education is not used for the benefit of the masses what is the use of it? (Zhao, "*Sanliwan*" 189)

In the end she chose to marry Yusheng; and Youyi's refusal of an arranged marriage did not only demonstrate the effect of the new *Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China* [zhonghua renmin gongheguo hunyin fa 中华人民共和国婚姻法] published in 1950 but also indicated the collapse of the authority of the father in the family. Everything said by Chairman Mao Zedong or the Communist Party became the yardstick. The traditional conformability between "the father" and "the Master" had been broken by a newly established relationship between the family and the nation. "The father" was more a biological claim in

Mao's era in the familial relationship, while Chairman Mao had become "the Master" to everyone in every family.

To the functionalization of marriage in *Sanliwan*, Lu Da had a specific analysis soon after *Sanliwan* was published. He argued that in *Sanliwan* "the love triangle suddenly resulted in three unmarried couples. Yusheng easily got Lingzhi, who had high school education and sent herself to his door; Yumei accepted Youyi because the latter needed her help to get remolded; Manxi unexpectedly got Xiaojun who sincerely wanted to repent and turn over a new leaf in his political life. Looking at these unexpected and hasty marriages, I think that the young people of nowadays are too careless with their marriages" (Lu, "Description" 9). In the same manner, Zhou Peitong and Zhang Baoxin also criticized the love schemata adopted in *Sanliwan*, pointing out that "men and women in *Sanliwan* got married not out of love but for competition…what they loved were not persons but 'political' and 'educational' qualifications" (Zhou and Zhang 7). Ding Zhi, on the contrary, had his own interpretations, saying that "People are different and unique in personality. These differences and personalities are the internal qualities, determining a person's charm in the eyes of different love pursuers. If we pay no attention to these internal differences but unduly emphasize the mythical and elusive love, we are actually denying the existence of reality and hence the law that ideology is built upon reality" (Ding, "Whether" 29)

When these critics argued about the logic of love in *Sanliwan*, they might not pay attention to the rural culture and the aesthetics of the peasants in choosing mates. They were using their own experience or theories to discuss how Zhao

Shuli should describe the rural love. As a faithful follower of Mao Zedong's "Talk at the Yan'an Forum" and with rich experience of living in the rural areas, Zhao Shuli should have had every reason to describe the love patterns among peasants in the way as he had observed or heard in that special age – if not totally, at least partially; furthermore, *Sanliwan* was fiercely criticized by Mao Zedong's literary critics during the GPCR for the configuration of its characters; for example, how could Fan Gaodeng, the village head and the Communist Party member, be selfish and indulged in developing his own individual economy? He must be established as a positive image. Similarly, why wasn't Ma Duoshou, the well-off peasant, thoroughly criticized? He should have been punished and even stepped underfoot by the Communist Party members or the masses. Yu Lin's "After Reading *Sanliwan*" [Sanliwan Duhou 三里湾读后] and Zhou Yang's "The Task of Building Socialist Literature" [Jianshe shehuizhuyi wenxue de renwu 建设社会主义文学的任务] both criticized *Sanliwan* for failing to substantially portray positive images of the Communist Party members and, therefore, failing to promote the mobilization for the socialist construction. Judging by this, it could be said that Zhao Shuli's *Sanliwan*, although a product of that politicized age, was still a believable depiction of realistic events and persons.

However, despite all the criticism mentioned above on how the characters failed to meet the requirement of the political propaganda, the heads of the four families did symbolically represent four different attitudes and classes in the early stage of the socialist reformation movement. Wang Jinsheng represented the group of devoted Party members, who disciplined themselves according to the

requirements of the Party and established themselves as the models to learn from. Fan Denggao represented the backward party members; although he made contributions in the Resistance War and was given the best land in the Land Reform Movement, his deep-rooted feudalism led to his indulgence in developing his own business and earning extra money - even by taking advantage of his position as a Communist Party member and the village head. Ma Duoshou was the representative of the "bad class'; he was sneaky and calculating, taking every possible means to make money and to hinder the development of co-ops. Yuan Tiancheng was a Party member but led a double life; publicly, he followed the Party's policy, but secretly he kept family private plots and did spare-time work. In this map of various acts, Zhao Shuli had truthfully depicted the difficulty of the socialist reformation in its early stage when the peasants had to publicize their means of production, which were taken as their lives, and took the road of agricultural cooperations.

The narrative style adopted in *Sanliwan* was welcomed immediately after it was published and highly evaluated by later critics. It was the result of the journey Zhao Shuli made to a village at the foot of Taihang Mountain, where he lived with the local peasants and observed the whole process of how the mutual-aid teams were set up and developed into the co-ops:

> they studied the local situations, consulted what had been done in the Soviet Union and other democratic nations, drafted the plan for the co-ops, and decided to first set up ten test ones in that prefectural district…I have

> never written anything about the agricultural production…consequently, I went to that old village again in the next winter and joined in their production, distribution, combination and expansion. In the winter of 1953 I began to write *Sanliwan.* (Zhao, "Before" 586-587).

These personal experiences resulted in the realistic depictions of scenes, languages and interpersonal conflicts in *Sanliwan*, highly evaluated by Mao Dun, who wrote that, "if segments are taken from Zhao Shuli's works and mixed in other writers' works, the careful readers can still recognize them. Why? It is due to the unique features of his literary language: lucid, meaningful and humorous" (Mao, "On Zhao Shuli" 18).

2.2.2 Liu Qing's *The Builder*

Liu Qing's *The Builder* was intended to be published in four volumes, but the plan was not realized due to the persecution he suffered during the GPCR. This research mainly focused on the first volume published in 1957. The story began with a famine which brought widow Liu with her son to Liang San, who was a widower in his forties. They set up a new family. The son was then named after Liang San, called Liang Baosheng, and after five years, Liang San and his wife had a daughter named Liang Xiulan. Liang San hoped to make a property for the family but failed repeatedly until the establishment of the PRC. He was given ten acres of land in the Land Reform Movement, and his hope to make a property for the family rose again. To his disappointment, his thoughtful and ambitious son,

Liang Baosheng, did not seem to be interested in building his own family; instead, he joined the Communist Party and frequently went to the "*xian*" 县 (county) to take part in the meetings of the Party. He accepted the task to set up test co-ops in this village and was busy with helping other poorer peasants and reforming the traditional cropping system. For the peasants who had just acquired land but did not have productive means, and for the rich peasants or landlords who still owned their productive means and wealth, the Agricultural Cooperative Movement meant the flow of the resources from the rich to the poor, and it also meant the collectivization of productive means and labor resources. Liang Shengbao encountered many obstacles, mainly from the rich peasants and all the elements who secretly hoped to develop their own business and become rich. After a series of selfless deeds, Liang Shengbao won the trust of the poor peasants, and his mutual-aid team attracted more peasants. In the end, Liang Shengbao's mutual-aid team achieved an unprecedented harvest and expanded into the first co-op in that county, having proved the correctness of the Party's line in the agricultural cooperative movement.

Jin Han, a famous contemporary literary critic, contended, "*The Builder* was the first that had the scale, intention and aesthetics of an epic among the novels about the agricultural cooperative movement" (Jin, "History" 40). According to Jin Han, *The Builder* "not only vertically combined history with reality through the "*tixu*" 题序 (prologue) but also horizontally connected what was happening in Hamatan with the changes happening in the nation; thus, the scheme for an epic was spatially and temporally formed…as for the portrayal of the protagonists,

Liang Shengbao as well as Liang San was trustfully and typically constructed, and the changes of their personalites and ideologies had truthfully reflected the change and transformation of different classes in the campaign of socialist reformation" (42-43). Through the anecdotes of "buying seed rice", "trying new methods of raising seedlings", and "going into the mountains to cut bamboos", Liang Shengbao had established his image of a selfless, upright and contributive Party member, a hero in the socialist construction.

2.2.3 Liang Bin's *Keep the Red Flag Flying*

Keep the Red Flag Flying was mainly about the struggle between two peasant families, the Zhu and Yan families, and one landlord family, the Feng family, in the central area of Hebei province. This struggle had lasted for three generations. Zhu Laozhong and Yan Zhihe's two sons were the main characters in this novel. Zhu Laozhou's father died, resulting from his desperate struggle against the local tyrant Feng Lanchi for the benefit of the whole villagers; in order to escape from Feng's persecution, Zhu Laozhong ran away as far as he could, but thirty years later he returned with his wife and two sons to seek revenge. He was warmly welcomed by his childhood playmate, Yan Zhihe. With Yan's help, the Zhu family settled down and the two families became friends and allies in dealing with external forces, especially in the struggle against the local evil forces represented by Feng Lanchi, who was already over 60 years old and became more powerful through uniting with the Nationalist forces. When the hope of revenge

seemed so remote and uncertain, an optimistic turn appeared. Yan Yuntao by chance got to know the Communist leader Teacher Jia and started his revolutionary career; and his younger brother Jiangtao was later enrolled in No. 2 Baoding Provincial Normal College. This college was known for its revolutionary spirit, and Jiangtao became the most active revolutionary young man. Since then Zhu Laozhong seemed to have found the right road and he was actively engaged in all the revolutionary activities organized and led by Yuntao or Jiangtao. In the end, he himself became a well experienced and determined revolutionary.

The political purpose of *Keep the Red Flag Flying* was obvious. The Communist policies were advocated through the dialogues between Teacher Jia and Yuntao and Jiangtao or generally between the Communist Party members and the peasants, and formed the main feature of this novel. A good example is the following dialogue between Yuntao and Teacher Jia, whose mission was to develop Communist members among students and dive into the rural areas to mobilize the peasants:

> [The Nationalist government] has decreed various exorbitant taxes and levies. Recently, they are examining all covenants and licenses, raising the price of salt and forcing the peasants to plant poppies and pay the stamp taxes. The peasants are depriving of their last means of livelihood. How can they stay alive? They should stand up and rebel. The mission of the Communist Party is to help the peasants to survive and get organized. For

> the time being, by taking advantage of the season and what the peasants need most, we should start from the capitation taxes…the poor and middle peasants are the main forces for us to motivate. If we forget this, we will lose the base. (Liang, "*Keep*" 256-257)

In this dialogue, the most important issues in the Communist revolution were mentioned: who is the enemy, who is the ally, what is the long-term goal, and how the present mobilization should be triggered off – it seemed to be a well-planned revolutionary strategy.

In this novel, class struggles and the Communist leadership were put before anything personal or familial, and the affective ties among the family members gave way to the need for revolution and class struggles. This point was overtly advocated in Jiangtao's talk with his father:

> When Yuntao was engaged in the revolutionary activities, your revolutionary consciousness was not yet strong. Now I think you have got the class consciousness. The Party's policy will sooner or later go through with the masses; otherwise, why there are more and more Communist members? Furthermore, you are my dear father. I bet you will not sell me (279-280).

This dialogue demonstrates that the traditional authoritative and subordinative relationship between Father and Son had been reversed, just because Yuntao was the commissioner of the Communist Party and his father was the first to mobilize.

The natural affective tie between the family members was thus turned into a means to achieve the Communist purpose, before which all traditional familial ethics lost their original meaning and the relationships among family members tended to be functionalized.

In 2008, a survey on the study of *Keep the Red Flag Flying* was made by Tian Yingxuan and Zhang Fengyan and three tides were identified: the first tide came right after the publication of this novel and lasted until the end of 1959. In this period, the study was more focused on its theme and character configuration, and most of the critiques were collected in the book *The Genealogy of Revolutionary Heroes –the Symposium of the Studies on Keep the Red Flag Flying* [Geming Yingxiong de Puxi – Hongqi Pu Pinglun Ji 革命英雄的谱系 – 《红旗谱》评论集]. The second tide came at the end of the 1970s and faded in the mid-1980s, represented by the book, *Symposium of the Reviews on Liang Bin's Works* [Liang Bin Zuopin Pinlun Ji 梁斌作品评论集], compiled by Wen Chaopan, Zhang Jinchi and Song Anna. These reviews re-evaluated the artistic and thematic values of *Keep the Red Flag Flying* that had been denied or misinterpreted by the proletarian critics during Mao's era. As the twenty-first century began, retrospections over the centennial development in every field led to the emergence of the study of the classic literary works. Liang Bin's *Keep the Red Flag Flying* was listed as one of the "One Hundred Classics in the Past Century" published by the Chinese Youth Press, and the study of *Keep the Red Flag Flying* flourished again; the result was the book *New Theory on Liang Bin* [Liang Bin xin lun 梁斌新论] published in 2004 (Tian and Zhang 117). In this symposium, new literary

theories were integrated into the explanations of this old classic.

Guided by Mao Zedong's "Talk at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art", *Keep the Red Flag Flying* was first and foremost a revolutionary fiction, focusing on the fight between the peasants and the local tyrants, between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party, and between the Chinese' resistance and the Japanese invasions. As the struggles developed from the local levels to the national and international ones, the revolutionary consciousness of the main characters was developed also: when Zhu Laozhong was appointed as the leader of the red army for the Gaoli Uprising, his pledge was more like a Communist Party member rather than a peasant.

Another impressive characteristic of this novel was its portrayal of rural life; for example, what people ate on festivals and what they did in different seasons. The names for food and local customs were familiar to readers from the North of China or the area where the story took place. The language in this novel demonstrated the author's expertise in using different languages to portray different characters based on their class backgrounds, personalities, and the needs of the propaganda. For example, peasants in this novel spoke in colloquial and vulgar languages, while academic terms were used in the communications between the students in No. 2 Baoding Provincial Normal College and Professor Yan Zhixiao about national and international affairs, concerning militarism, nationalism, imperialism, Mussolini and dictatorship (Liang, "*Keep*" 408-409). Zhu Laozhong's pet phrase "*chushui caijian liangtui ni ne*" 出水才见两腿泥呢 (The mud on the legs will be shown after the feet are pulled out of the

water) (Liang, "*Keep*" 17) vividly revealed the personality of an uneducated peasant who was passionate to revenge. There were more such examples; for example, Feng Lanchi shouted angrily "*shei ta niang kudang po le lou chu ni lai*" 谁他娘裤裆破了露出你来 (whose mother's pants had been broken to give birth to a bad egg like you) (8)? Zhu Laozhong's wife commented emotionally that "*li le niang de haizi jiu xiang li le yang de gua*" 离了娘的孩子就像离了秧的瓜 (children being taken away from their mother are like melons being cut off the seedlings) (127); Feng Dagou boasted carelessly that "*sizhi chang de zhitiao'er jiu neng jiu Dakuan*" 四指长的纸条儿就能救大宽 (a fourth-finger-long slice of paper will save Dagui) (121); and Zhu Laoxing's wife complained ironically that "*ta shi tuo kuzi dangpi duociyiju*" 他是脱裤子放屁多此一举 (what he [Zhu Laoxing] is doing is like to undress in order to fart) (292).

2.2.4 Li Liuru's *Changes in the Past Sixty Years*

This novel, as the author indicated in its preface, was intended to "sketch the political and social changes in the past sixty years, to reveal the chronicity and tortuousness of the Chinese revolution, to describe the process of sacrifice and victory, and to summarize the success and failures"; therefore, "it is grand in motif, lengthy in time, and extensive in scope" (Li, "*Changes*" 3). This novel was planned to be finished in three volumes. This first volume was published in 1957; the second one in 1961; but the third one was hardly started before the author was persecuted to death by Mao's literary guards. This research was mainly focused on the first volume.

The story started with the introduction of when and how the protagonist, Ji Jiaoshu, was born. His mother, Tong Shaoying, was once a maiden servant in a big family; she was bought by Jiaoshu's father to give birth to sons to continue the family lineage. After Jiaoshu's father died, Jiaoshu, with his mother and two brothers, was driven out of the big mansion, jointly bought by Jiaoshu's father and his brother. Since then, Jiaoshu learned of the toughness of life and gradually developed a righteous and rebellious spirit to fight against unfairness. Like every young man of that age, he studied hard in order to get an official position through scoring high in the feudal civil-service examination, but the examination was abolished as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's reform movements progressed; soon Sun Yat-sen's and Huang Xing's revolutionary theory gradually won popularity. In the conflict between the former two's desire to "maintain the imperial system" and the latter two's wish to "overthrow the imperial system and set up an institutional system", Jiaoshu supported the latter. He later realized the power of guns and joined the army. He became one of the organizers and leaders in the Wuchang Uprisings and gradually established himself as an outstanding scholar and military commander. After Yuan Shikai took the position of the president of the Republic of China, China fell in the chaos of wars among warlords. Jiaoshu left for Japan. When he returned back to China, it was the period of Duan Qirui's regime and China was in the split between the North and South. Jiaoshu sold his family assets and set up an enterprise in his native town in order to save the nation through enterprises, but his effort failed. At his most depressive time, Mao Zedong's Communist theories attracted him, and his

patriotic theories and deeds also attracted the attention of Mao Zedong's revolutionary forces. Ji Jiaoshu joined the Communist Party in 1922 and since then became the loyal servant of the Communist revolution and contributed greatly to the establishment of the PRC through his constructive theories and hard works.

This novel, based on Li Liuru's personal life, had exposed many truthful yet unknown conflicts and compromises between different political forces and influential persons. Historical events, chaos of wars, and the cruelty of revolution were pieced up around Jiaoshu's personal activities. In this novel, Jiaoshu was a witness to history and also a participant in history. The description of real historical events, launched, controlled and ended by real influential persons in Chinese history, was the main feature of this historical, autobiographical and family saga novel, though it did not lack any variety in the portrayal of people's appearances, personalities, psychological activities, and social relationships. Different from the revolutionary or socialist novels produced in this historical period, *Changes in the Past Sixty Years* realistically described how the protagonist was born and raised in a big feudal family, how he learned to seek pleasures when he was very young, and how different forces equally contributed to the formation of a new China, driving off all foreign forces and liberating the previously explored classes. It might be due to his realistic descriptions of the real events or persons in this novel and his upright and unyielding personality that Li Liuru was identified as an "anti-Party element" and a "traitor" when the GPCR started. He died from persecution in 1973, with the third volume of this novel barely started.

Even up to now, there have been few critiques on *Changes in the Past Sixty Years*. When the first volume was published in 1957, it became a hit and was immediately translated into English, Russian, Japanese and several other languages; adaptations were also created (Ling 27). On the list of the royalties paid to seventeen writers by People's Literature Publishing House in 1967, Li Liuru's *Changes in the Past Sixty Years* was placed at the fourteenth (Bady 653). Critics and famous scholars, such as Shen Junru, Liu Baiyu, Jian Bozan, Xie Juezai and Yang Shuo all once highly evaluated it (Guo 27), but as Li Liuru was identified as an "anti-Party element", praises for this novel disappeared and it was gradually neglected by readers.

If most of the novels published in the same historical period were romanticized to meet the requirement that revolutionary and socialist heroes should be created, *Changes in the Past Sixty Years* took on a plain style. It was true that the traditional paradigm of using adjectives to express the author's likes or dislikes was still adopted in this novel; for example, the phrases "eyes of the mouse" and "cunning smile" were used to describe Ji Jiaoshu's uncle, who was selfish and sneaky and had grabbed all the properties belonging to Ji Jiaoshu and his mother; however, most of the characters were depicted in a realistic style and through what they did and said in the real situations and at certain real historical moments.

Different from its contemporaries, the protagonist in *Changes in the Past Sixty Years* was a real historically influential person, not created in line with Mao's literary theories, or based on the types of certain rural peasants, for the

political purposes. This protagonist's personal activities would inevitably get involved other historically influential persons, such as Li Yuanhong, Liao Zhongkai, and He Shuheng, whose images and roles in the writing of Chinese history were still hot topics even up to today. A realistic description of them based on the author's personal interactions with them was obviously a danger for the author himself, whose immediate effect was the lack of romanticized Party members or Mao's great functions and images in the writing of Chinese history, to say nothing that all the activities described in this novel were so distant from the daily lives of the workers, peasants and urban craftsmen who were identified by Mao as the intended audience of revolutionary or socialist novels. Accordingly, government decrees, personal letters, and famous articles characteristic of traditional literary rhetoric in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were frequently quoted, which made this novel an obvious misfit judging by the guiding principles written in Mao's "Talk at the Yan'an Forum": firstly, "literature and art…serve the masses of the people" (Mao, "Talk" 77), and "the masses of the people" were mostly illiterate and did not have any education in traditional rhetoric, emphasizing rhythm and format.

2.2.5 Ouyang Shan's *Three-Family Lane*

Three-Family Lane was set in Guangzhou. The intriguing relationship among three families headed by the capitalist, Chen Wanli, the landlord-bureaucrat, He Yingyuan, and the blacksmith, Zhou Tie, was woven around a timeline from the May Fourth Movement in 1919 to Chiang Kai-shek's massacre

to the Communist Party members in 1927. The protagonist Zhou Bing, the son of that blacksmith, was, from the very beginning, portrayed as a handsome and sentimental young man. He was loved by both his cousin Ou Tao and Chen Wenting, who was the fourth daughter of the Chen family – a family of comprador bourgeoisie. Zhou Bing loved Ou Tao who was the daughter of a shoemaker but died in the workers' demonstration on May 30, 1925. Although Wenting loved Zhou Bing very much, when Zhou Bing, following his brother, got involved in revolutionary activities, she strayed away from him and married a Nationalist bureaucrat.

Although *Three-Family Lane* was once criticized by some revolutionary critics for Zhou Bing's ambiguous emotional attitude towards Wenting and her sisters, who all loved Zhou Bing very much, the theme still belonged to the category of revolutionary or proletarian novel. It emphasized the doctrine that class origin had decided the road taken by the youth. The disparity between Zhou Bin and the daughters of the Chen family in their talks, interests and attitudes towards the exploited and revolution was first and foremost decided by their different economic status and social backgrounds. A conclusion was thus drawn that although love was traditionally defined as free of any prejudice and practical considerations, it could not transcend class boundaries; bourgeois women were apt to be the victims of materialism and the pursuers of luxurious life and, therefore, impossible to truly love the revolutionaries: what they had at most was the libidinal impulse or a shaky feminine sentiment.

2. 3 Interactions between Literature and Society

Elisabeth Croll once suggested that due to the restriction of the residence registration system during the collective period the geographical mobility for the peasants was greatly limited and the kin groups retained a great deal of influence over rural marriage negotiations (qtd. in Hershatter, "State" 995); William Parish and Martin Whyte also postulated that "during the collective period, bride price in Guangdong became far more important than dowry and it was usually linked to women's increased work in the fields, which made their labor more valuable" (qtd. in Hershatter, "State" 995); Sara L. Friedman, through her investigations on the marriage in eastern Hui'an County, a coastal region of southeastern China, concluded that "women's reluctance to live or have sex with their husbands after marriage has provoked repeated state reform campaigns since the establishment of China's socialist regime in 1949" (Friedman 312). However, in the literary works of the 1950s, young people, especially women, were free to choose their own spouses, and their ultimate standards might concentrate in the political stand of the would-be husbands; financial consideration was scorned and taken as a shame or a sign of bourgeois ideology; parents who were generally categorized as the ones to be educated by the youth in the socialist reformation period would, of course, be convinced by their children's revolutionary spirit and wise choice, and gave their consent in the end. In *Sanliwan*, both Lingzhi's victory in the pursuit of Yusheng and Youyi's success in the resistance against the arranged marriage proved the assumption that "Marriage Law campaigns aspired to make marital reform integral to societal transformation… [The] purpose was not simply the

liberation of women or the undermining of patrilineal kin groups; rather, marriage reforms also aimed to fashion appropriately liberated socialist subjects who would at once constitute the new socialist nation and reaffirm its civilizing power" (Friedman 315). In this way, the authority of the father at home was completely undermined and the intention of the Communist Party to use free-choice marriages as the liberating force to activate women's labor force and re-adjust the familial structure to decrease large families and increase conjugal families had been achieved.

There was a correspondence between what had been described in *Sanliwan* and *The Builder* and what had been discovered by Elisabeth Croll in her research. She found that "the notion of an ideal spouse emerged during the collective period. Political and socioeconomic standing, although sometimes in conflict, were both considered important" (qtd. in Hershatter, "State" 994; "Women" 7); In the study done by William Parish and Martin Whyte in 1978, similar but more complicated information was provided that

> in most cases mate choice involves double approval and a double veto power, both the young people and their respective parents must agree… Defying his parents is particularly difficult for a young man; he depends upon his parents for housing, for fund to pay the costs of the wedding, and for help and assistance in later married life. For the woman the obstacles are more emotional than financial - she wishes to have a secure base back in her native village after her move to her husband's home" (173-174).

The following table is quoted from William Parish and Martin Whyte's book *Village and Family in Contemporary China* (175). It is quite illustrative of the main concerns in mate choice in the 1950s-1960s and the degree of their applications.

Table 34 Degree of Free Mate Choice by Characteristics of Couple

(Gamma Statistics)

	husband's class label	wife's class label	husband's education	wife's education	husband a cadre
Youth dominance in mate choice (N)	- .02 (49)	.39 (36)	.41 (26)	- .02 (23)	.63[a] (69)
Introduction not involved (N)	- .35 (75)	.08 (61)	- .39 (45)	- .72* (38)	.74* (106)

Source: Post-1958 marriages from marriage sample, with cases offered by informants as particular example of free or forced marriage excluded.

[a] relationship weakened when controlled statistically for whether informant was a native of the village, an educated youth returning to his or her home village, or an urban youth sent to live in the village.

*$p \leq .10$

This table shows that class labels, education and political stands were all important considerations in mate choice in the 1950s and 1960s, and "the influence of education and cadre service are generally stronger than class background, although the pattern for education appears inconsistent...educated youths have more contacts of their own outside the village" (175). Similar investigations were made by Yan Yunxiang and similar discoveries were discussed

in his *Private Life under Socialism*, which chronicled the changes of the families in a northern Chinese village from 1949 to 1999. Based on the discussions mentioned above, the situation of mate choice and marriages in the 1950s and 1960s might be summarized as: basically the standards for mate choice or marriages were locally variable, "mediated by other sorts of ties, and at the same time extremely adaptable to the successive environments of revolution and reform, flourishing in new venues even as the old ones disappear" (Hershatter, "Women" 7).

Although the 1950s and 1960s were ages emphasizing collectivization and contribution, the family was still seen as the most fundamental unit to realize the purpose of social stabilization; although conflicts existed among family members due to their different attitudes towards the problem of land ownership and collectivization or in the attitude of whether to participate in mutual-aid teams, co-ops, and communes, final harmony was achieved and all dark schemes or anti-socialist obstacles set up by former tyrannical landlords, predatory capitalists, and corrupt officials would be crushed in the end, and the socialist fabric would be strengthened and consolidated. This thematic paradigm was noticed by Irene Eber. She noted:

> [the novels] published between 1948 and 1958 deal with the social world of men and women and family… Aside from interpreting political events and questions of ideology, the novels project a powerfully attractive vision of social harmony to their readers or illiterate listeners, together with

> models of male and female behavior that do not impinge on this harmony…in addition to the political and ideological messages of struggle and conflict of the plot, other messages are contained in the subtext, reassuring readers that the social fabric has remained intact throughout war and revolution. (Eber 71-72).

Compared with the family saga novels of the early twentieth century, extended families were no longer the narrative focus of this group of family saga novels. Landlords or capitalists who were once the Masters of huge households with big flocks of servants were pulled down by Mao's proletarian regime. The old familial relationships established under the feudal system disappeared. Instead, senior people lost their prestige established in the traditional ethic system. Devotion to Mao's regime and contribution to the socialist construction became the only yardsticks by which a person's value is judged and the relationship among family members is appropriated. There was only one unshakeable God-like father in every family – Chairman Mao Zedong. Moral education, heroic models, and the proletarian dictatorship were the common tools to remold the feudal and superstitious minds or to destroy the subversive classes. This pattern was exemplified by activities of different types of families in *Sanliwan*. The Wang and Fan families belonged to the exploited class, while the Ma and Yuan families separately belonged to the middle peasants and the well-off peasants. Based on their class backgrounds and the propagandistic needs, bad things could only happen in the latter two families. As it turned out, the Ma family broke up due to

Ma Duoshou's autocratic desire to control everything in the family; and Yuan's family was turned upside down by Yuan Tiancheng's meddlesome and aggressive wife. Despite all these, the eventual alignment of different classes was achieved through the marriages of the three young couples from these four families, hence the victory of the Party's line that the forerunners should help those who were left behind and the educated should help those who were illiterate, so that the whole society would be mobilized.

Sociological studies also show that the industrialization before and in Mao's era had drawn immigrants from the rural areas to the cities while with their relatives or parents left back in the countryside. This situation was exactly reflected in Zhou Erfu's *Morning in Shanghai* and Ai Wu's *Tempered Steel*, both of which were focused on the workers' lives in cities. Besides the antagonistic relationships between the workers and the factory/mill owners or between the exploiters and the exploited, the connection between the immigrant workers and their relatives in the countryside was another outstanding feature of these two novels. In Ai Wu's *Tempered Steel*, single men and women sent money home on paydays and went back to their villages on their off-days; in the city, where they worked on their own, they tended to form associations based on the place where they were born or came from, which was, in Maurice Freedman's eyes, the extension of lineage. Freedman discussed that in imperial China, "a lineage was justified by a genealogy; people began to produce longer and wider genealogies to justify more extensive groupings, going so far… that attempts were sometimes made to group together in one organization all the lineages in one area bearing a

common surname" (Freedman 325); however, this kind of lineage was not strong enough to form a real threat to the nation due to the economic conflicts between the members. In the same article, Freedman also mentioned that, in Mao's era, although the lineage

> still occupies the same area, its erstwhile leaders now lack the economic resources and power, the ritual authority, and the external political support and connections to allow them to continue to have meaning. And beyond the range of the single lineage, the lateral bonds of clanship, uniting lineages in their common interest, are broken by the lack of ritual centers and the confinement of social relations within units, laid down by the state for the benefit of its system of control… The family now lies open to the state. It has little to hold it together. Its ritual bond has been removed. Its head can call on few sanctions to support him in the exercise of authority – his wife can divorce him, his children defy him. The allocation of tasks in economic life is not now in any important respect a family matter. The whole range of activities once covered by the family is now reduced to a narrow field in which husband, wife, and children associate together in the interstices, so to speak, of large institutions – the work group, the dining hall, the nursery – which have taken over the function of economic coordination, housekeeping, and the rearing and education of children. (Freedman 332)

Mao Zedong said in 1937, "the moment the power of landlords was overthrown in the rural areas the peasants' movement for education began" (Mao "Selected…First" 53). However, this "peasants' movement for education" did not come on a national scale until the 1950s when the party realized the conflict between peasant illiteracy and the need for the rapid construction of the socialist country. Zhao Shuli's *Sanliwan* started with how difficult it was to carry out the Anti-illiteracy policy in the village, especially during the harvest season. There was no classroom, and most of the young people were occupied by the works in the field or the technical projects to modernize the implements of production.

Charles Hayford recognized a "broad, continuous three-pronged literary movement" in Chinese history which involved efforts 1) to reform the written and spoken language; 2) to expand and reform the formal school system; and 3) to promote informal or nonschool forms of social education (Hayford, "Literacy" 155). The first one was carried out by the elites in the reforms and movements in the early twentieth century, through advocating vernacular language in writing and speaking, opening western-styled schools, and developing educational theories on "*pinmin iaoyu*" 贫民教育 (poor people's education), "*pingmin jiaoyu*" 平民教育(common people's education), and "*minzhong jiaoyu*" 民众教育 (mass education). The second effort was embodied in the setup of the Department of Social Education under the Ministry of Education in 1912; it was responsible for matters ranging from religion and rites to science and arts and even zoos and parks (Hayford, "*Reform*" 143-44). The third effort was started in the 1930s, when the old schooling system was identified by Mao Zedong and his Bolsheviks as

"divorced from the genuine educational needs of China's rural millions" (Mao, "Selected...First" 54; Peterson, "Education" 220). Night schools, educational clubs and various nonschool forms of social education were developed in Mao's Soviet bases in the 1930s and a more specific educational term was invented – "*gongnong jiaoyu*" 工农教育 (worker-peasant education). This term was very indicative of the nature of the education: its students were workers and peasants who were physical laborers rather than theorists, scientists or literary workers. It meant an education that was "both consciously class based and linked to wider social and political struggles" (Peterson, "Education" 221).

In accordance with Lenin's wisdom that "it is impossible to build a socialist society on a foundation of mass illiteracy" (Lenin, "Task" 11), Mao Zedong made his famous speech at the Meeting of Cultural and Educational Workers in the Shan-Gan-Ning Border Region held on October 30, 1944, in which he said, "An army without culture is a dull-witted army, and a dull-witted army cannot defeat the enemy" (Mao, "United" 235). The political and economic significance brought by education was further emphasized in Mao's political report at the Seventh National Congress of the Communist Party held on April 14, 1945. He emphasized to all Party members that "the elimination of illiteracy among 80 per cent of the population is a vital task for the new China. Proper and firm steps should be taken to eliminate all enslaving feudal and fascist culture and education" (Mao, "Problem" 305).

In September 1950, the first National Conference on Worker-Peasant Education was held in Beijing, announcing the elimination of "illiteracy over an

extended period" as the national policy (qtd. in Peterson, "*Power*" 46). In 1952, the State Council established the Anti-illiteracy Work Committee modeled "directly on the Soviet institution of the same name established by Lenin in 1919" (Peterson, "*Power*" 43-44). Local branches were set up at the township level with their members selected from the mass organizations, including the Communist Youth League, the Women's Federation, the Educational Workers' Union and other groups ("Statistical" 576). In late 1953, the Anti-illiteracy Work Committee was merged into the Ministry of Education, as the latter's role was further enhanced in the first five-year plan. In 1955, the pressures caused by illiteracy in various fields of the socialist construction rose dramatically following Mao's appeal for rapid collectivization. In order to deepen the Anti-illiteracy Campaign, on March 15, 1956 the National Anti-illiteracy Association was established with the mission of "assisting the government to mobilize and organize the social and mass strength to carry out the Anti-illiteracy Campaign and to finish its objectives on time" (qtd. in Wu, "Mao Zedong" 18). On 29 March 1956, the Central Committee and the State Council jointly issued an "Anti-illiteracy Decree" calling for the elimination of illiteracy in the countryside within five to six years. Specific plans and schedules were required to be reported to the Anti-illiteracy Work Committee by the governments of provinces, cities, counties and even villages. Within months and weeks after the "decree" was published, anti-illiteracy associations were established at all levels to carry out this national policy in conjunction with the Agricultural Collectivization Movement.

When the Great Leap Forward movement started in 1958, the Anti-illiteracy

Campaign was revived with even greater fervor (Pepper 278). Anti-illiteracy satellite counties or units emerged. Based on the statistics reported to the central government, by the end of 1958, 79.7% of counties and cities had eliminated illiteracy; from January to September 1958, 100 million young people received anti-illiteracy education.

In 1958, a report from Shanxi province aroused Mao's attention. It told of how people further consolidated the Anti-illiteracy Campaign through preventing the problem of recurrent illiteracy - they used phonetic symbols to help mark and memorize words; and once the phonetic symbols were memorized, words with phonetic symbols could be pronounced and further learned. The report claimed that after only about 100 hours of study of words marked with the phonetic symbols, learners could achieve the basic standard of literacy: making simple notes and reading newspapers.

When in 1964 the survey on the illiteracy rate was made alongside with the second national census, it showed that the illiteracy rate of the population above the age of 15 had been reduced from 80% of the population in 1949 to 52% in 1964. Based on the following goals of the Anti-illiteracy Campaign, defined in the "decree", this mass cultural movement might have helped increase the social productivity of that time: to master fifteen hundred to two thousand characters, to basically understand popular books and newspapers, to be able to keep basic accounts and write simple notes, and to know how to calculate by using an abacus. Whether this was the standard of being literate or whether the literacy rate had been achieved in such a high percentage as reported above needs further studies

but it is not the main concern of this research.

In the 1950's *Marriage Law*, feudal marriages – purchased marriages, exchanged marriages or arranged marriages - were abolished and the right of adults to marry or to divorce at will was enhanced, which, according to Maurice Freedman, was "almost a perfect symmetry of the rights of men and women in property, residence, choice of work, and control of children" (Freedman 331). However, no matter how women were legally given the freedom of mate choice or divorce, and no matter how they had earned economic independence through equal pay for equal labor, they were still looking for someone stronger than or superior to themselves. Some examples include Lingzhi in *Sanliwan* and Yufen in *Morning in Shanghai*.

A close reading of these family saga novels revealed another fact that under Mao's flag-wagging slogan that "woman can hold up half the sky", women's social status was not actually improved. Although, legally, women were entitled to free-will divorces and the inheritance of properties, their equality with men lay in "equal pay for equal work in production" and could "only be realized in the process of the socialist reformation as a whole" (Mao, "Note to 'Labor'" 268). In other words, women were de-sexed or overtly exploited in the name of liberation. This was the continuity of Marxist gender theory. As it was shown, although the *Communist Manifesto* supported universal suffrage and the protection of female labors, women were never taken as men's equals – they were "slaves of the husbands", as claimed in Marx and Engels' "The Holy Family", and it was taken as "the natural division of labor in the family" (52). Growing up in a culture that

had subordinated women for thousands of years, Mao Zedong and his peasant armies had spontaneously taken women as the Other species of humanity, associated with doing domestic works and raising children. Furthermore, if it were not Mao's coercive demand to respect women, those peasants who had been brought up in the history of patriarchal culture and did not have much knowledge of democracy, science and equality might never give women opportunities to "fanshen" 翻身 (turn over). This idea was implied in Zhao Shuli's *Saliwan*. Yuang Tiansheng's wife was portrayed as a troublemaker. She meddled in her daughter's family lives, which resulted in her daughter's divorce; she interfered with her husband's affairs and made decisions in the manner of the authority in the family. In the end, her husband threatened to divorce her and her aggressiveness was immediately put under control. She became subordinate again and the order in the family returned. This plot implied that although the exploited peasants had been turned over from being exploited, women could never be turned over from their subordination to men; otherwise, the social order or the familial order would be threatened and misfortune might befall. Another more illuminating example was from Liu Qing's *The Builder*. In this novel, Sufang secretly loved Liang Shenbao, but when she gave Shengbao the wool socks knitted by her for him, Shengbo seriously scolded her with such harsh words: "Sufang, you should honestly live with Shuanshuan. Don't play the paltry game that once had been played by you…don't tarnish the reputation of our village" (Liu, "*Builder*" 397). These examples showed that women, if not encouraged to work as men, should strictly discipline themselves according to traditional moral values, updated through

Maoist guidance: to assist their husbands in socialist construction and to take care of their children in their growth into the successors to the Communist cause. Besides all those traditional gender virtues that had kept the family in harmony, other qualities such as being capable of enduring hardships, working hard, and satisfying with a simple life were also required of women in Mao's era. Dressed like men and hoping to be an active and contributing element in the construction of a poverty- and war-stripped country, women lost the features characteristic of femininity, which had been officially defined in Mao's revolutionary wordbook as "bourgeois". In another word, women were either revolutionized or de-sexed in the tough project of revolution and construction. Wang Ban once commented that the revolutionary culture in Mao's era was neither feminine nor masculine; it was "a collective essence that was sexless" (Wang, "*Sublime*" 189).

Although with all the experiences of living together with the peasants, learning their languages and imitating their behaviors, none of the writers dared to expose anything in conflict with the Party's policy; for example, arraged marriages were seldom mentioned in most family saga novels in Mao's era although they were quite prevalent in the 1950s. On 11 February 1972, an article written by Song Qingling (Madame Sun Yat-sen) was published in *Peking Review*. It pointed out that "…when girls are to be married, their parents often ask for a certain amount of money or various articles from the family of the would-be husband" (7). Song's discovery was substantially supported by Eugene T. Murphy's research. He stated:

> ...the 1950 law notwithstanding, families continued to play the central role in marriage arrangements...orchestrated by the senior generation and negotiated by go-betweens. Similarly, despite periodic state campaigns to eliminate "mercenary marriages," economic exchanges persisted, albeit in a reduced and often clandestine fashion...The parents of income-earning daughters now found themselves in an improved bargaining position in marriage negotiations, and the balance of marriage payments shifted to a nearly pure bridewealth system. (Murphy 227)

Murphy's research was further proved by an article published in *Jiangyin Daily* [Jiangyin ribao 江阴日报] on 29 September 2009. It was entitled "The 1950s: An Age of Arranged Marriages", in which an informant recalled that

> nine out of 10 marriages were arranged...If a young man was found good, the girl's family would send a go-between to the young man's family for the "*shengchenbazi*" 生辰八字 (information on the young man's horoscope) and put the piece of paper with that information under the statue of the Kitchen Buddha. If there was no argument or misfortune occurring in the next 3 days, the first test was passed; then the fortune teller was invited to calculate whether the young man's fortune matched the girl's; if no conflicts were found, a match maker was invited to represent the girl's family to formally propose to the young man's family and the marriage would be arranged" (column 3).

In contrast to the social reports mentioned above, free-choice marriage or free love was popular in many of the family saga novels; for example, in *Keep the Red Flag Flying*, Chunlan refused her parents' and even the Yan family's arrangements to marry her to someone else while her lover Yan Yuntao was in jail without any hope of being rescued; in *Sanliwan*, Lingzhi took initiates to propose to Yusheng and Youyi refused an arranged marriage. Divorce was taken as a great shame in all novels, which was actually underlining message of Mao's propaganda to achieve a harmonious society – though free divorce was publically asserted in the 1950's *Marriage Law*. Furthermore, in another report made by the Women's Association of Shanghai in 1961, the following problems were uncovered. It said that "one-sided propaganda" was made emphasizing women's "boundless energy", "painstaking hard work", "working in illness," and "contributing as much as men did", which had resulted in the "deterioration of women's health", such as "gynecological disease", "chronic gastritis", "abortion" and "amenorrhea" (qtd. in Qiu, "Women's" 73). This kind of information or truth was totally absent from this group of family saga novels.

2.4 The Family Saga Novel as a Genre in Mao's Era

In contrast to the first group of family saga novels, rural life was the focus of this group of family saga novels and peasants became the protagonists.

Except for Li Liuru's realist style that had somewhat demonstrated the author's autonomy in literary aesthetics, almost all other family saga novels in Mao's era had more or less romanticized the Communist history and purposefully

built heroic protagonists. Under the guidance that "literature and art [should] fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part" (Mao, "Talk" 70), characters in this group of family saga novels were stereotyped. It was the continuity of the tradition started by *The Spring and Autumn Annals* and *The Chronicle of Zuo*, appropriated by the authors in the early twentieth century, but exaggerated in the novels written in the 1950s. Heroes and villains were unambiguously portrayed along the line drawn by Mao's theories on class division and the qualifications to be a socialist hero. "Gao Daquan", the name of the protagonist in Hao Ran's *The Golden Road* [Jinguang dadao 金光大道] (1972) represented the standard for the heroes: "*gao*" (tall), "*da*" (big), and "*quan*" (perfect), which was the abbreviation of the proletarian aesthetic standard emphasizing that "the positive characters should be highlighted among all the literary characters; among the positive characters the heroes should be highlighted; and among the heroic characters the leading heroes should be highlighted – they should be 'high', 'big' and 'perfect' (Song 33).

When discussing the characterization in the novels published in early Mao's era, Joe C. Huang identified four categories: heroes, cadres, villains, and the men in the middle (Huang, "Heroes" 3; "Villains" 331). The "heroes" and "cadres" had epitomized normative values, while the "villains" represented the anti-socialist elements and should be remolded or laid out.

In order to achieve the purpose of mobilization, the functional aspect of literature was emphasized while its entertaining and artistic aspects were purposefully undermined. To realize the goal of spreading Communist ideologies

to an audience composed of workers, peasants, craftsmen and urban immigrants who were mostly illiterate, the language used by the authors should be plain and simple; the content of the literary works should accordingly follow the directions specified by Mao Zedong in his "Talk at the Yan'an Forum": "to expose the duplicity and cruelty of Japanese imperialism and all other enemies of the people…[and] to point out the inevitability of their defeat…we should certainly praise the masses of the people, their toil and their struggle, their army and their Party" (Mao, "Talk" 70); and the form of the literary works should be "a mass style" (70). Because the content, style, language and protagonists were all predetermined, and in order to fit into the pre-determined patterns, the following descriptions seemed unnatural based on the textual contexts. For example, when Yuntao first told Teacher Jia that he would like to join in the revolution, Teacher Jia enthusiastically but blindly replied:

> Do you want to join in the revolution? Then go to the peasants, go to the workers, and be a miner! How do you activate their revolutionary consciousness and make them willing to be organized? It is the revolutionary experience – all revolutionary cadres are developed from the masses. (Liang, "*Keep*" 162-163)

It seemed to be improper for Teacher Jia, an experienced Party leader, to say this to a young peasant who, for the first time, asked him about revolutionary things. These comments were more like a stereotyped mobilization for the intellectuals

who, according to Mao's class division theory, needed to be tempered and toughened through living with the peasants, workers, or miners. Similar situations happened in Yang Mo's *The Song of the Youth*, which was another revolutionary novel published in the 1950s but could not be strictly counted as a family saga novel. When the protagonist Lin Daojing refused her step-mother's persuasion for her to marry a bureau officer in an agency run by the Nationalist government her strong argument seemed abrupt and stiff: "I would rather die than to be married to those dog-like warlords" (Yang, "*Song*" 17). Based on the marriage culture prevalent in that society and the fact that she was brought up in a rich family, whose head owned large pieces of land in the countryside, this hatred for a high official, who was in early thirties and had huge estates in Shanghai, Nanjing and Beiping, seemed to come from nowhere.

Although there were some excessively politicized statements to achieve the goal of typifying heroes or villains, the language used in this group of family saga novels, on the whole, continued in the direction of being vernacular and colloquial, which was the tradition of May Fourth fiction but also the spirit of Mao's mass-line literature, which insisted that "the thoughts and feelings of our writers and artists should be fused with those of the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers. To achieve this fusion, they should conscientiously learn the language of the masses" (Mao, "Talk" 73). To achieve these purposes and avoid being "misfits", the writers in Mao's era went to the basic working units, sleeping, eating and working with the local people. The typical example was Zhao Shuli. He purposefully stole a hen of a woman who was famous for filthy words and

quarrels. As expected, she came out into the main road and began to curse. Zhao Shuli hurried to write down all the filthy words she said until he thought it was enough and he came out to apologize. Due to this kind of serious attitude towards the persons and events portrayed in their literary works, the authors in Mao's era left many sentences like below in their works. The sentence, "*ma si gonggong chan si po, lazhe zhangfu tiao da he*" 骂死公公缠死婆，拉着丈夫跳大河 (to abuse her father-in-law to death, to fight against her mother-in-law determinedly, and to drag her husband together to jump into the river), vividly portrayed a woman who was a hellcat (Zhao, "*Sanliwan*" 131); the following passage was used to describe a scoundrel who enjoyed running after beautiful women: "when shall we meet again to talk about it?…in your home?…all right; you won't answer. You wait and see if you can get out of this. I am going to spread the news that you arranged to meet me here. When your mother hears about this, she'll draw your sinews and tear the hide off you" (Zhou, "Changes" 93).

In this way, language did not only play the role of communication but also the portrayal of the moral and spiritual world of the characters, which was usually hard to achieve through direct descriptions.

The form of chaptered novels was adopted in Zhao Shuli's *Sanliwan*, Li Liuru's *Changes in the Past Sixty Years*, Ouyang Shan's *Three-Family Lane*, and Zhou Libo's *Changes in a Mountain Village*. It was the main characteristic of the traditional novels but abandoned by the authors of the family saga novels in the Republican period except for Zhang Henshui. However, the couplet which was traditionally used as the subtitle for each chapter to highlight its main content was

replaced by simple sentences or phrases which no more had the traditional features associated with couplets such as rhythm or antithesis. In Zhou Libo's *Changes in a Mountain Village*, every chapter was entitled by the name of the main character in that chapter, and this device was adopted in a later novel, Ge Fei's *Enemy*. In Liu Qing's *The Builder*, the traditional paradigms of using prologue and epilogue to achieve the structural symmetry and narrative directions were used again. All these efforts of reviving the traditional aesthetics were the active responses to Mao's call for "the fine things in our literary and artistic heritage" (Mao, "Talk" 81). Obviously, in the traditional literary and artistic works, there were no such concepts of class struggles or Marxism-Leninism; the only thing that might be securely and "critically assimilated" was the form.

Born in a peasant family and raised among peasants, Zhao Shuli knew clearly that in rural areas the most enjoyable entertainments were still the traditional oral tales, operas, folk songs, or chaptered novels read to the public by the educated. Since "whom to serve" was the first consideration for all the writers, as emphasized by Mao's "Talk", Zhao Shuli reused the form of chaptered novels, which actually retained the main feature of oral storytelling – a long story had to be broken into chapters or segments for the story tellers to take rests in between. The narrative style used in *Sanliwan* was also characteristic of oral storytelling, which could be exemplified by the first sentence of this novel: "the story should be started from the Flag Pole Yard". As a result, like in a traditional oral tale, suspensions were given at the end of each chapter to attract the listener/reader to longer for what might come in the next part/chapter of the story. The narrator took

on the position of an omniscient observer because he knew the whole plot of the story and controlled the process of its realization. Zhao Shuli once confessed that he took into consideration all the crafts characteristic of storytelling when he wrote *Sanliwan* (Zhao, "Before" 135), upon which Jin Han had a systematic evaluation:

> Due to his knowledge of storytelling and chaptered novels, Zhao Shuli usually started his story with sentences like 'long time age…' or 'the story should be started from…' and paid attention to consistency without abrupt jumps in plot…In his narration, such traditional devices as foreshadowing and suspension were applied skillfully. This not only increased the interest of the story but also put readers in suspension to read more. (Jin, "*History*" 33)

Because Zhao Shuli's *Sanliwan* was published early in the 1950s and achieved immediate success, his writing style, which had widely been praised by the Communist critics, was obviously taken as the model for his contemporaries.

The metaphorization of the characters' names was another outstanding craft adopted in this group of family saga novels. This device was one of the main features of *A Dream of Red Mansions* but rarely used in the family saga novels published in the Republican period. In *Sanliwan*, the following nicknames or metaphorical names were used to portray the person's individuality and personalities: "*Hu Tutu*" 糊涂涂 (muddy headed), "*Chang Youli*" 常有理 (always

well-founded in argument), "*Tie Suanpan*" 铁算盘 (to calculate carefully and budget strictly), "*Re Buqi*" 惹不起 (can't be provoked), "*Neng Bugou*" 能不够 (always swanky) "*Yi Zhengfeng*" 一阵风 (a gust of wind); and in *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* there were "*Ting Mianhu*" 亭面糊 (flour paste) and "*Fu Laizi*" 符癞子 (scabby-headed). Even without the presence of the person, his or her nickname was illuminating enough to give a general introduction of what kind of person he or she was and even what kind of value system or ethics the person might have.

2.5 The Absence of Family Saga Novels in the 1960s - 1970s of Mao's Era

In the 1950s, the family, when standing as an individual or private social unit, was in conflict with communes or the socialist big family, and consequently its bureaucratic role as one part of the state apparatus was eliminated: the father no longer had the authority to control the family and every family member was obedient to a bigger authority: the Communist Party or Chairman Mao. Revolutionary heroes or socialist contributors were the models for the family members to learn from; any respect for authorities that was traditionally given to the father or seniors was not allowed. All Chinese citizens had only one family name which was "*gong*" 共 - the initial of Communism or the Communist Party. Any force that attempted to turn back the wheels of history or Communist history would be smashed into pieces. Mao Zedong knew well that totalitarianism was the best means for him to achieve his authority over a huge population of feudal

illiterates, whose sense of law was built upon the feudal ideology of obedience to the Son of the Heaven, whose image was self-claimed by Mao Zedong but painted with a layer of western civilization: a savior. Mao's totalitarianism or iron-fist policy was finalized after Liu Shaoqi, the highly respected national leader, was pulled down. Liu Shaoqin took a critical attitude towards the Great Leap Forward and advocated a more realistic and pragmatic policy towards economic reforms. In order to consolidate his position in the Party, Mao Zedong launched the GPCR as a means to destroy his enemies in the Party. Liu Saoqi, Deng Xiaoping and some other leaders in the central government were labeled as "capitalist roaders". Charged with such crimes as a "traitor" and a "counter-revolutionary", Liu Shaoqi was dismissed from the position of Chairman of the PRC in 1966, put under house arrest in 1967, expelled from the Party in 1968, and he died or disappeared from view in 1969. If a person with such a high position and so much contribution to Mao's regime as Liu Shaoqi - the First Vice Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party in 1945, the Vice Chairman of the Central People's Government in 1949, the Head of the National People's Congress Standing Committee in 1954, the Vice President of the Central People's Government in 1956, the Chairman of the National Defense Council and the Chairman of the Central People's Government in 1959, and Mao's chosen successor in 1961 – could be beaten down so quickly in the name of various crimes, who else would dare to say anything different from Mao's ideology?

Lu Ling could be taken as another example to show that anyone who dared to sing a different song from Mao's literary instinct would be unquestionably got

rid of. Lu Ling's early literary works featured two types of proletariats: peasants and workers, with both of whom he once worked for a livelihood. Under his pen, the first group of proletariats was near-sighted, narrow-minded and selfish - though hardworking and kind-hearted, while the latter group was open-minded, socially experienced, courageous and independent, but at the same time they were knavish and cold-hearted, even like the lumpen-proletariats. These two types of proletariats could be symbolized by Wei Haiqing and Zhang Zhengshan in *Hungry Guo Su'e*. Guo Su'e's husband was an opium addict and she madly loved Zhang Zhengshan, a machine operator in the nearby mine. Although Guo Su'e knew that Wei Haiqing had also coveted her for a long time, she only had affairs with Zhang Zhengshu and hoped that he would take her away to a far place. In the end, she was persecuted to death by her husband and his accomplices, while Zhang Zhengshan, with a couple of workers, was fighting with the foreman for higher pay and Wei Haiqing walked around her house cursing but doing nothing to rescue her. This story was based on his own experience of working as a small employee in the office of a mine. Whether Lu Ling was writing about peasants and workers as they were in life or based on his own interpretations or aesthetics was not the problem at issue; the problem was that his peasants and workers did not fall in the category defined by the Communist aesthetics, according to which peasants and workers should be positive heroes. For this, he was severely criticized for having "distorted" the glorious images of peasants and workers.

When the PRC was established, he wrote *The Motherland Is Marching Forward* [Zuguo zai Qianjin 祖国在前进] in 1951 to celebrate the great progress

China was making. However, he was still criticized by Lu Xizhi for his affirmation of the contributions made by capitalists (Lu, "Realism" 75). After he returned from the Korean War in 1953, he wrote stories based on his own experience in the War; however, he was again criticized for his *The Battle in the Lowland* [Wadi shang de zhanyi 洼地上的战役], which featured a plot about the emotion between a Chinese soldier and a local Korean girl. His purpose was to demonstrate how disciplined and patriotic the Chinese soldiers were when faced with the choice between military discipline and personal emotion. However, he was still criticized and the reason was, according to the military discipline or literary discipline, such emotional affairs should not happen at all, because this would "negatively influence the progress of the battle and subvert the spirit of internationalism…[and] to have stained the pure friendship between the Chinese and Korean people set up through death and blood" (Hou 110-111). As an answer to these fanatical Communist critics, Lu Ling wrote a refutatory article "Why There Should Be Such Criticism" [Weishenme hui you zheyang de piping 为什么会有这样的批评]. In this article, Lu Ling bravely and sincerely pointed out:

> our critics are completely controlled by the Left-wing passion. They could find the meaning of 'bourgeoisie' or 'against the motherland' in any phrase and adjective. The harm of this kind of criticism is obvious. It has severely ravaged the vitality of literary creation. In front of this criticism, literature has to give up its function of education through close-to-life images and has to give up its literary language and expressive contents and styles. All

> the characters cannot speak or think based on their personalities and real emotions. Every character has to say the same language as the newspapers say or as 'they say'. (Lu, "Why" 33-34)

Lu Ling was put in prison immediately after this article was published – it was taken as the evidence of his reactionary ideology. A different voice was thus erased from the Chinese literary scenario of that time, together with his literary theories and works.

After the PRC was established in 1949, the Communist Party gradually nationalized the publishing industry, established the Writers Union to institutionalize the control over the writers, and centralized the book distribution system. A strict censorship was implemented, with Mao's "Talk" as the guidance. The insistence on the use of critical realism, started in the 1930s by the League of Left-wing Writers, was enriched by so-called social realism and revolutionary romanticism. Stereotyped heroes and villains were unambiguously created based on the types of the classes defined by Mao Zedong. Love should be subordinate to the demand of revolution. Anything reminding people of sex, religion, abstraction or non-reality would be disallowed because they were unhealthy, decadent and harmful to the construction of a healthy and wealthy socialist country. Although the Hundred Flowers Campaign during 1956 and 1957 had the intention of purifying such problems as bureaucracy and authoritarianism within the ranks of the party, a quick crackdown followed for fear that too much exposed discontent toward the new regime by intellectuals might lead to the damage of the party's

reputation. Tighter control over propagandistic works was implemented. By the late 1960s, literature and art were completely under the control of Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, and her followers, who vigorously attempted to "create a new socialist revolutionary literature and art worthy of our great country, our great party, our great people and our great army" ("Summary" 13).

On the evening of November 28, 1966, more than 20,000 revolutionary workers in the fields of literature and art from Beijing and other parts of China held a meeting in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. At the meeting, important speeches were given by Zhou Enlai, Standing Committee Member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and Premier of the State Council, Chen Boda, Standing Committee Member of the Political Bureau and leader of the cultural revolution group under the Party's Central Committee, and Jiang Qing, the first deputy leader of the cultural revolution group under the Party's Central Committee and adviser on cultural work to the Chinese People's Liberation Army. The following literary and art line was constituted at the meeting:

> hold high the great red banner of Mao Tse-tung's thought, give prominence to proletarian politics, resolutely implement the proletarian revolutionary line represented by Chairman Mao, thoroughly criticize and repudiate the bourgeois reactionary line, unite on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung's thought, complete the tasks of struggle, criticism and transformation and strive to create the

most splendid new proletarian literature and art in human history. ("Quarterly" 186).

Since then a triangular power network was formed: the army led by Lin Biao, the cultural revolutionary group controlled by Jiang Qing and Chen Boda, and the government represented by Zhou Enlai. The "most splendid new proletarian literature and art" turned out to be the revolutionary model opera, a new genre, flourishing during China's GPCR under the supervision of Jiang Qing. At the same time, Lin Biao, Mao's officially declared successor, developed a simplified and dogmatized version of Mao's thoughts published in the form of "Little Red Book" - quotes from Chairman Mao's works - in order to popularize Maoist ideology among the relatively uneducated military forces. The "Little Red Book" immediately became popular all over the country. It was estimated that from 1966 to 1968, 740 million copies of the *Little Red Book* and 150 million copies of Mao's *Selected Works* were printed (Hsia, "Chinese" 234).

Except for newspapers filled with revolutionary slogans and films advocating revolutionary wars and class struggles, Lin Biao's Little Red Books of Mao's quotes and Jiang Qing's revolutionary model operas represented by the following works became the highlights of the homogeneous literary scene: *White-haired Girl* [Baimaonü 白毛女], *The Red Detachment of Women* [Hongse niangzijun 红色娘子军], *Taking the Tiger Mountain by Strategy* [Zhiqu weihushan 智取威虎山], *The Red Lantern* [Hongdeng ji 红灯记], *Shajiabang* [Shajiabang 沙家浜], and *The Raid on the White Tiger Regimen* [Qixi baihutuan 奇袭白虎团]. Mao's

words and phrases were quoted in newspapers, articles and daily conversations. Streets, stadiums, and restaurants were renamed in revolutionary terms to convey devotions and reverence. Special exhibition halls were built to commemorate Mao's revolutionary deeds. Parents gave their children political names, so much so that the generation born around 1966-1976 could easily be identified through their given names, such as "Jianguo" (building the country), "Jianshe (building the socialism)", "Aimin" (loving people), "Zhaoyang" (the rising sun), "Xiangyang" (facing the sun or following Mao's revolutionary line - because Mao Zedong was compared to the sun or sunshine), "Kuihua" (sunflowers, always following the sun), "Wenge" (cultural revolution), "Shengli" (victory), and "Weihong" (defending the Red Guards or the Red Proletarian Regime). This insane and chaotic situation was vividly described in Robert Pledge's introduction to Zhensheng Li's *Red-color News Soldier*: "the whole of China became a theatre in which the audience was increasingly part of the play—from the poorest peasant attending a 'struggle session' to the 'class enemy' forced to bow to the waist in humiliation, from the rarely seen leader waving from a Jeep to the denouncers, from the rebels to the counter-revolutionaries" (Li, "Red" 8).

Ironically, all these inhuman and destructive behaviors of "eliminating bourgeois ideology, establishing proletarian ideology, remolding people's souls, revolutionizing their ideology, digging out the roots of revisionism, and consolidating and developing the socialist system" (qtd. in Huang, "Power" 208) in this movement of "collective thought reform" (Dittmer 102) turned out to be the content of the root-seeking or trauma literature in the post-Mao era.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FAMILY SAGA NOVELS IN THE 1980S-1990S

3.1 Historical Background

The death of Mao Zedong marked the end of the Communist agenda in every aspect of social construction. At the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress held in December 1978, Deng Xiaoping's call for the intellectuals to liberate their thought and not to fear a return to repressive politics (Link, "*Uses*" 18) was actually a clue that political tension was still in existence. This dramatic gesture of the conciliation from the government to the intellectuals bewildered some who still suffered from the trauma of the GPCR; however, some enthusiastic writers were willing to believe that the right time had come for them to write down their inner feelings and to play their traditional roles of moralizing people's ideologies and reforming society. In October 1979 the Fourth National Congress of Writers and Artists was held and Zhou Yang, a highly esteemed man of letters and persecuted in the GPCR, was rehabilitated as the chair of the congress. This stirred an unprecedented enthusiasm among writers to seek truth from the facts and to reevaluate Mao's "Talk at the Yan'an Forum". Literary works, categorized as "trauma literature", and political essays were published in great amount, critical of the defects of contemporary society and supportive of humanistic values.

However, the Democracy Wall event in 1979 and the subsequent "Anti-spiritual pollution" campaign in 1983 and the "Anti-bourgeois liberalization" campaign in 1986 forced intellectuals to re-evaluate the undertone of "the

freedom of speech, press and assembly" that had been written in the new PRC Constitution of March 1979. Furthermore, Deng's "socialist market economy" of encouraging private enterprises to go together with the state- and public-owned enterprises in the free market economy was a complete denial of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, which had long been taken as the yardstick for the making of national policies and, therefore, caused a nationwide panic; at the same time, as the national door was opened again to the outside world after the Reform and Open-up policy was published, western lifestyles and value systems once again confused the Chinese people: if capitalism was "decadent" and "destined to die" as advocated by Maoism, why did the capitalist countries have higher GDPs and better established social welfare systems? Deng Xiaoping's Cat Theory, "it doesn't matter whether a cat is white or black as long as it catches mice," was interpreted as an open declaration of political and economic pragmatism, which in the end benefited those who were adventurous enough to take advantage of natural and national resources to make money for their own pockets and to develop private enterprises; those, who were brainwashed by the ethics of proletarian revolution and socialist construction, gradually lost their prestige in the current of commercialization and were left in pain and dislocation, caused by their inability to adapt to the social transformation and ideological conflicts. Although the first phase of economic reforms in rural areas – the application of the household responsibility system (HRS) - led to an increase of almost 15% in per capita income from 1978 to 1984, the prices of agricultural inputs rose, which, according to Shujie Yao, was due to the fact that the

government was using the success of rural reform to subsidize the heavy cost of restructuring the urban economy, staring in 1985 (Yao, "Economic" 357). Barry Naughton used "government revenues eroded" to describe the paradox that, on the one hand, the economic reform fed development and growth, but on the other hand the distribution of gains was unfair, and "crony capitalism was prominent," which led to "new combinations of economic power linked with emergent entrepreneurs with established bureaucrats" (Naughton 37). In the name of enterprise reform, the local government tried to legitimize their control over the local property rights, through linking the financial revenue from the local assets with the personal income of managers, workers, and even government officials, thus breaking the traditional economic format characterized by the control of industrial assets by the local government at various levels. Consequently, the gap between the rich and the poor was enlarged; inter-regional conflicts were increased; and the foreign trade was mostly adjusted by the market mechanism. Previously established rules for resolving international and domestic conflicts no longer worked, but new ways had not yet been established. An unprecedented sense of "dislocation" and anxiety prevailed.

In China, the 1980s was full of clashes between the old economic and political system and the new demands from the market economy; commercialization caused great changes in people's value system; dislocation embodied in the feverish westernization and a search for the resurrection of a new powerful identity went along side by side. What happened on June 4, in 1989, normally known as the "Tian'anmen Square Incident", might be taken as a turning

point to make Chinese intellectuals more rationally think of themselves and to evaluate the situation China had to face against an international background of post-colonialism and post-industrialism. Political stability and social order, which had been emphasized in Mao's era, were again identified as the essence to develop economy and gain worldwide recognition. Analysis of the failures of the past three decades in 1981's "Resolution of the Party History since the Foundation of the PRC" [Guanyu jianguo yilai dang de ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi 关于建国以来党的若干历史问题的决议] revealed that economic growth could never occur without political stability and institutionalization. As the main concern of the central government was gradually shifted to the development of a civil society, its originally centralized power was gradually divided especially in the field of economy and culture, but the political centralization was even more emphasized as the essence of social order and stability. This situation could be summarized by "state-society dualism" advanced by Rong Jian and further developed by a group of elites at a cross-Pacific video conference held by the Cultural Department of the American Embassy in Beijing in late 1988, at which it was postulated that "economic freedom fostered by an authoritarian state, the so-called East Asian model, was the only way for China to develop the social, economic and cultural preconditions for its eventual democratization" (Ding, "*Chinese*" 22).

When the reform proceeded in the early 1990s, this "state-society" or "central-local" dualism led to a tendency of economic decentralization and institutional re-structuralization. Barry Naughton also noticed this. He contended, "since 1992 the focus of Chinese reform policymaking has shifted away from the

previous strategy of creating pockets of decontrol in which entrepreneurship can flourish…toward the creation of general rules that govern the entire economy and permit competition across a broad range of activities and on a level playing field" (Naughton 39). The *Company Law of the People's Republic of China* [Zhonghua renmin gongheguo gongsi fa 中华人民共和国公司法] was passed in December 1993 and two important banking laws were passed in 1995. From 1992 to mid-1997, restrictions to the state-owned enterprises had been the agenda of reforms, with the intent that all firms "be treated equally, subject to essentially the same rules, tax rates, and price-setting mechanisms" (Naughton 39). The increased interaction between the market transition and the structural adjustment implied greater mobility of labor between sectors and jobs and of capitals among diverse uses. Jobs in state-owned enterprises were increasingly uncertain. In the late 1990s, large-scaled lay-off and unemployment occurred. Based on the statistics provided by the *Statistical Yearbook of China-2000*, 6.1 million employees were laid–off from the state-owned enterprises and 5.8 million were fired.

Contrary to the shrink in the amount of state-owned enterprises was the booming of the township and village enterprises (TVEs). As is known, Deng Xiaoping's first step in the economic reform was the "household responsibility system" (HRS), which literally meant that an individual household, or a set of households, assumed the task of production for and payment to the central government. It was characterized by the abandonment of governmental interventions in collective properties and commodity prices. The HRS is now rated as the most successful of China's economic programs. It generated a self-

strengthening dynamics between the urban and rural economies levered by the market force. It fundamentally undermined the capability of the central government in economic, social and political controls and led to the extension of the local property rights. "From 1978 to 1990, the proportion of agricultural procurement regulated by state prices dropped from 94.4 percent to 25.2 percent, while the proportion regulated by the market increased from 5.6 percent to 52.2 percent" (Li, "Price" 21). Based on the statistics provided by the National Statistical Bureau, since the establishment of the HRS, the rural labor force employed in the TVEs had greatly increased from 30 million in 1982 to more than 90 million in 1990, while the employees in the state sector had slightly increased from 86.3 million in 1982 to about 110 million in 1990. The increase rate of the first group was much higher than the one of the second group. The research made by Guanzhong James Wen on the total factor productivity in China's farming sector revealed that "the HRS showed a clear advantage over the commune system in increasing the total factor productivity index. The rapid increase in output and the concomitant fall in inputs from 1982 to 1985 provide a classic example of an efficiency improvement induced by a dominantly institutional innovation" (Wen, "Total" 1-2).

After Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Open-up policy was activated, the entrepreneurship replaced collectivism, and spiritually the harmonious relationship between the state and the individual families was broken. With the HRS started in rural areas, most farmlands were contracted or subcontracted to individual families on the basis of lease; and all the old public assets were

redistributed, rented, or sold to the highest bidders. Individual economy was no longer labeled as "the undermining of the cornerstone of the socialist wall"; instead, it was encouraged and gradually dominated economic activities. The market-oriented economy led to contacts and co-operations between different regions and trades, which resulted in the collapse of the traditional planned economy, working through a "vertical" and hierarchical administrative system: the central government, the regional and local governments, and the grass-roots working units. Its hierarchical and rigid features were embodied in the centralized budgetary allocation in funds, resources and investment, and priority was always given in the order of state-run, collective-run, and private-run enterprises. This vertical and hierarchical administrative system made horizontal communication and cooperation almost impossible. As the economy was more market-oriented, the previously privileged social groups lost their prestiges, and more autonomy was legislatively demanded by the local authorities. National capitalists grew up; international and cross-regional co-operations multiplied; and new cities emerged as commercialization led to the decrease of farming land and the increase of cooperations between regions and districts. The "all-member contract system" gradually dominated the whole job market. More employees were laid off for higher efficiency and lower cost, while the pension system was not well established. All these factors contributed to the turbulence, instability and commoditization of the Chinese society in the 1980s-1990s, in which "family values, forms, and strategies that once coordinated personal life with older relations of production and distribution are now out of sync with economic and

political trends" (Coontz 257).

Under the HRS, the family again was taken as the fundamental unit of production, but its social "role as a mediator between its members and bureaucratic organizations" (Sussman 142) was paralyzed in front of the arbitrariness of market behavior. Based on Mark Selden's investigation,

> on the one hand, rural household division accelerated as contracts took effect and the central economic role of household was restored. On the other hand, [there were] signs of a resurgence of extended families, notably among entrepreneurial households emphasizing nonagricultural activities, capital accumulation, and expanded excess to labor power, in ways that invite comparison with pre-land-reform patterns including the relationship between social class and family size and structure. (Selden 140).

Elisabeth J. Croll also mentioned a kind of "aggregate family", in which patrilateral or affinal networks of kin pooled resources and labor together, even though they might live separately (Croll, "*From*" 173). This suggested that the autonomy and the economic role of the household had been greatly increased. Based on the anthropological investigations, the fertility rate had been declining in the late half of the twentieth century. It was 5.442 per woman in 1971, 2.238 in 1980, and 1.8-2.0 in the mid-1990s; and this declining tendency mainly happened in urban areas, caused by the one-child national policy and the corresponding state

incentive and penalty measures, crowded housing conditions, high living expenses, and an intensive competition in education and job opportunities. Furthermore, women in the reform era tended to adopt a more rationalized gender and age agenda "to satisfy a mix of practical and affective needs: old-age support, income maximization, and emotional intimacy" (Hershatter, "*Women*" 34); transnational upward mobility through marriage to foreign citizens was in fashion (10). Although marriage established upon bride price prevailed again, women obviously enjoyed more autonomy and power in deciding their life patterns and emotional trajectories. The higher divorce rate was a good indicator.

So, in the eyes of the defenders of the family as a biological/affinal unit, the real family was "lost" or "degenerated" when "the conflicts between the family and the household become fierce after China's one-child policy was established in 1967 and Deng Xiaoping's 'Household Responsibility System' was ushered in in 1978" (Creed 329); in its place was the "chosen family" (Weston 38) or the household bond on propinquity. In such context, however, the family saga novels with the big and extended family as the narrative setting had dramatically increased in the 1980s-1990s. The discrepancy between non-existence in reality and abundance in literature formed a striking feature associated with this group of family saga novels, demanding a new approach to the reading of them and pushing literary as well as non-literary readers to search for something implied or allegorized.

3.2 The Textualization of the Family in the Family Saga Novels

3.2.1 Zhang Wei's *The Ancient Ship*

The Ancient Ship was published in 1986 and won the Mao Dun Literature Prize in 1996. Set in a fictional northern town called Wali, which was also known for the bean noodles on which the townspeople lived, Zhang Wei's *The Ancient Ship* described the ups and downs of three families over three generations. The Sui family was once the wealthiest, but had declined by the generation of Sui Yingzhi, who was eager to give away money that he considered to be debts owed by the Sui family to their tenants; later political changes left Yingzhi's children, Paopu, Jiansu and Hanzhang nothing but poverty and grief; the Zhao family, represented by Master Four Zhao and his nephew Zhao Duoduo, gradually rose from wealth to power through taking violent actions during various movements, especially against the Sui family; and the Li family, known for eccentricities in the past, had been living under the contempt of the villagers until the 1980s, when Li Zhichang's studded gear had modernized the Wali Bean Noodle Factory and his innovation brought light to the households in Wali. Two parallel thematic schemata went side by side through the whole story: love and hatred among the three families and the search for the meaning of history or national spirit against the tumultuous years before and after the PRC was founded: the land reform movement, the Great Leap Forward followed by the great famine years of 1959-1961, the GPCR, and Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in the 1980s. The unearthed ancient ship revealed that Wali was once connected with the outside world through the Luqing River, and Sui Buzhao, Su Yingzhi's younger brother,

who once followed Zheng He sailing to the West, was the living evidence of China's exploration spirit. The stone grinder which had witnessed so many social transformations but never changed its shape and duty was just like the person who took care of it - Baopu. Baopu – whose name literally means "hold onto simplicity" – was the symbol of the Communist Party member: he repeatedly read Qu Yuan's *Heavenly Questions* [Tian wen 天问] and Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*; he insisted that the bean noodle factory should belong to the whole town rather than to be named after "Sui" or "Zhao" (Zhang, "*Ancient*" 217); and he forgot all the pains and resentments between the Sui and the Zhao families by helping out with his expertise when accidents occurred in Zhao Duoduo's Wali Bean Noodle Factory.

The noteworthy point of this novel is its avoidance of political terms associated with the defining moments in contemporary Chinese history. For the townspeople who were illiterate and lived in a small town, which was once famous for its local products but gradually isolated due to the drying up of the waterway, they might know nothing about what had happened outside that small world, filled with feudal patriarchal culture, superstitious conventions, and ignorance, but the national movements or disasters seemed to have never forgotten the people there; for example, when Baopu's wife Guigui almost died from starvation and Baopu hoped to cut the tree skin into small pieces to feed her, he could not find any knives - because all of them, together with the iron cooking pots and stoves, had been grabbed away to produce steel (Zhang, "*Ancient*" 82). This implied the result of the Great Leap Forward movement. Although the author

did not mention the term "the Great Leap Forward" to identity this disaster, the great loss and tragedies caused by it were figuratively portrayed in a literary language. In the same way, the land reform movement was portrayed as a battle for revenge, and innocent lives were tortured in the annihilation of the exploiting classes. Even when Wali entered the age of the contract system, certain old powers were still invisibly controlling people's lives and producing new tragedies. In a sympathetic tone, *The Ancient Ship* told a story of how the hatred provoked by political movements and people's greed for wealth and power were even more fearful and brutal than any natural disasters.

Liu Zijie once commented that in *The Ancient Ship*, Zhang Wei was "searching for moral inspirations, which had been lost in the process of modernization" (Liu, "Folk" 6). His proposal was supported by Zhang Wei himself. Zhang Wei once said that "an artist should be a defender of the moral world; he should also be a night watcher, keeping his eyes open and taking the responsibility of a moral defender" (Zhang, "*Anthology*" 57). This morality was embodied in the attitude towards history, reality, man-made calamities, natural disasters, love, and hatred. Baopu, with his generous heart and fortitude, was the symbol of this morality; he forgave and gave. He found that tribulations were cyclical, and, therefore, in order to find the way to avoid tribulations, people should often check and reflect on history for inspirations and lessons. This might be the reason that the following scenes were repeatedly played in this novel: how the hostess of the Sui family, the biological mother of Jiansu and Hanzhang, died in insult; how forty-two people were buried alive in a yam cellar; and how the

ancient ship was unearthed amongst others. This warning against the recurrence of historical tragedies was in correspondence with what some Western scholars were doing in their researches on Chinese politics: factions and policy cycles (Goodman 430).

Master Four Zhao in this novel was a special character. He was a human being but possessed attributes that ordinary human beings did not often have; for example, he had a "weird" disease, and there was a snake living in his stomach. Normally he stayed in his big house, but whenever there were disasters or disputes it was always he who gave the final say. In a sense he was the patriarch of Wali, from before the PRC was founded to the age when Deng Xiaoping's reforms were started. Nobody was able to shake his authoritative position and nobody even dared. A good example was the anecdote during the GPCR. The red-guard with a red-face led a group of "*zaobanpai*" 造反派 (rebel factions) rushing into Zhao's great yard, determined to pull down this biggest "*zouzipai*" 走资派 (capitalist-roaders). The red-guard shouted that "we dared to pull down the emperor, to say nothing of a small Zhao Bin" (Zhang, "*Ancient*" 490). The result was that the red-guard lost his eyes and ironically became a blind poet for the rest of his life; while Zhao Bin, Master Four Zhao, enjoyed a more unshakable authoritative position since then. He even had the power to let Baopu, Jiansu and Hanzhang released from the tortures of those red guards. Of course, the real reason was his lust for Hanzhan and since then Hanzhan fell in his control. Master Four Zhao seemed to be a legend in this novel. He was the history of Wali and held great power and awe. He seemed to possess all the qualities to be admired or

feared by people in Wali: the senior position in the lineage, intelligence, knowledge, aristocratic style, courtly manner, shrewd sense of the situation, calmness in front of dangers, wiliness of buying popular supports, and the blackness of pressing people to commit suicide. He witnessed disasters and sometimes made them in Wali, but his authoritative position was never even slightly shaken. Instead, no matter what forces poured in Wali, in the end they had to withdrew, with Master Four Zhao remaining in the controlling position. The novel ended with Master Four Zhao lying in hospital stabbed by Hanzhang, while Hanzhang was accused of murder, waiting for the court to hear the case. Although Baopu's promotion to the position of manager in the Wali Bean Noodle Factory was an unanimous behavior among the townspeople, his brother Jiasu was dying of an incurable disease and his sister Hanzhang was waiting for the trial. Comparatively, Master Four Zhao seemed still to have the upper hand: his sons and daughters were all in towns or cities occupying important positions, and they had already threatened to punish Hanzhang quickly and severely. History did not seem to very much favor the suffering and vulnerable people in Wali, this small, backward and evil place, where only those who committed crimes seemed to have the ability to avoid being hurt.

The title of this novel, "the ancient ship", might have many metaphorical meanings. It might stand for China, which, like an ancient ship carrying all its ancient powers, values and wounds, was ready for new explorations. Consequently, magical realism or metaphoric writing was the main feature of this novel. First of all, there were a group of grotesque characters in this novel: Master

Four Zhao, Bo Si, Sui Buzhao, Zhang Wangshi, Shi Dixin, and Leilei. They all had traits alien from ordinary people. There were supernatural and mysterious happenings in the history of Wali and people's daily lives, such as the drying-up of the Luqing River, the destruction of the old temple by lightning, the collapse of the city wall in an earthquake, the discovery of the subterranean river, and the watery blood emerging from the ancient ship. Furthermore, there were descriptions of frightening natural phenomena and superstitious conventions. All these had endowed this novel with a surrealist inclination and power, intensifying the theme that Wali had suffered enough, and it ws time to stop the tragedy.

The traditional paradigm of polarization was adopted in the construction of personalities. Paopu's generosity, self-discipline, loyalty, dedication and sedateness were comparatively highlighted through the contrast of his half brother's "bad" qualities. Jiansu's mother Huizi was born in a big bourgeois family. She was beautiful, proud, elegant and strong-minded. When she figured out that she had to yield to the cruel reality for survival she chose to burn herself. With his mother's blood running in his body, Jiansu was passionate, rebellious, aggressive, and ambitious. He did everything to try to re-establish the prominent position of the Sui family in Wali and competed attentively with the Zhao family; however, when Bopu might be entrusted with the Wali Bean Noodle Factory, according to the will of the public, he even tried to seek an alliance with Master Four Zhao to fight against his own brother for that position. He never got the bean noodle factory, but was driven around due to his debts and his incurable disease. Jiansu's firmness, passion and braveness could have made him a threat to the old

economic and political system, but his ambition, selfishness and narrow-mindedness destroyed him; he was too excessively engaged in private gains or losses and knew nothing about the lessons presented by history. In the same way, Zhao Duoduo's cruelty, ignorance, vulgarity, violence and mindlessness made Master Four Zhao's refinement, cunningness, perspicacity and viciousness more impressive.

3.2.2 Chen Zhongshi's *White-Deer Plain*

Winner of Mao Dun Literature Prize and esteemed as "a national epic for its return to the tradition of Communist landscaping…especially the political battles between the Communists and the Nationalists" (Wang, "*Narrating*" 19), Chen Zhongshi's *White-Deer Plain* was actually a masterpiece of propaganda for the contemporary reformists: the Cat Theory plus Confucian values and iron-fisted actions. Bai Jiaxuan, by sneaky means, grabbed from his cousin brother Lu Zilin a piece of land, which, according to his dream, was blessed by a good geomantic omen and would bring prosperity to the family; through planting poppies and processing them into opium he became the richest person in the village and its vicinity; yet, he unshakably followed Confucian values, which were personified by Mr. Zhu, Jiaxuan's brother-in-law; in the end, Jiaxuan became the most respected and awed Patriarch in the White-Deer village. He led the villagers to renovate the Ancestral Temple and turned it into a school for all the local kids; he paid more than what was asked for when poor people sold him lands or other things; he impartially carried out the provisions of the "xiangyue" 乡约 (County

Act), so that no more theft, gambling, fighting or ritual violations happened in the White-Deer village, and when almost all the inhabitants in that mountainous area, including his relatives, worshipped a dead lecherous woman named Xiao'e and asked him to build a temple for her for fear that her ghost might destroy the whole village through spreading plague, he, as the Patriarch, fiercely condemned their pleas. After obtaining Mr. Zhu's hearty support, he publicized his determination to defend his patriarchal authority and to wipe out the evil remnants of that shameless woman. He summoned the villagers to dig out her bones, burn them, and build a six layered iron tower to sit on her ash casket; after the plague retreated and the conflict between the Communists and the Nationalists intensified, he more disciplined himself by the Confucian norms such as benevolence, righteousness, propriety, self-cultivation and sincerity, rather than to pursue bureaucratic positions as his rival and cousin brother Lu Zilin did. When Xiaowen and Lu Zhaoqian, who were both once expelled by him from the family clan due to their impious behaviors and indulgence in the seduction of an evil woman, showed their repentance and willingness to worship their ancestors in the Ancestral Temple, he warmly welcomed them back. Bai Jiaxuan, in this novel, was constructed as the most idealized Confucian Patriarch.

Mr. Zhu was portrayed as the most intelligent and self-cultivated Confucian scholar in this novel. He once ranked second in the provincial civil-service examination and took "*chuandao, shouye, jiehuo, zhushu*" 传道、授业、解惑、著书 (transmitting wisdom, imparting knowledge, answering questions and writing scholarly books) as his unshakable responsibility (Chen, "*White-Deer*"

19); however, the esteem and credit held by him were far more than that: he was a divine sage and spiritual leader. Every new county head or provincial governor, without exception, would visit him to show respect, to listen to his analysis of the political situation, and to seek administrative policy; when conflicts arose, he could always find answers to the satisfaction of every side and won their respects. His concern for the ordinary people and the nation was embodied in his drafting of the County Act, his persuasion to the military general Fang Shen to retire his two hundred thousand soldiers attacking the revolutionaries, his sympathy, rectitude, incorruptibility, capability of leading people to survive from the unprecedented famine, and his mobilization to resist the Japanese invasion and support the revolution of Zhu De and Mao Zedong. Compared by himself to Zhu Geliang, the most famous military counselor and self-cultivated scholar in the Three Kingdoms Period, he demonstrated his charisma "more powerful than a mighty force" (Chen, "*White-Deer*"545).

Jiaxuan's admiration for Mr. Zhu can be proved through the following details. Although his household yards had been thoroughly renovated, the tablet inscribed with Zhu's handwriting "*Geng Du Chuanjia*" "耕读传家" (Perpetuate the Family through Farming and Study) was continuously hung in the most important position; when Mr. Zhu asked him to uproot all his poppies in bloom, he did accordingly although it meant a huge loss financially; whenever Jiaxuan felt bewildered or frustrated he would walk miles to visit Mr. Zhu for guidance. Therefore, Bai Jiaxuan and Master Zhu formed a kind of coalition and cooperation: Mr. Zhu was the decision maker and Jiaxuan was the practitioner.

When the last empire was overthrown and people were lost at how to lead a life without an emperor, Mr. Zhu drafted the County Act for Jiaxuan as disciplines and guidance for people to follow: "*De Ye Xiang Quan*" 德业相劝 (The Co-persuasion of Virtues and Properties), "*Guo Shi Xiang Gui*" 过失相规 (The Co-regulation of Malpractices and Faults), and "*Li Su Xiang Jiao*" 礼俗相交 (The Co-existence of Rituals and Conventions), which were actually the core part of Confucianism about how to construct a courtly, orderly and harmonious society. To the plague that wildly spread and destroyed many lives so that rumor, horror and evil superstition got the upper hand, Mr. Zhu's encourage, support and advice turned Jiaxuan once again into an unshakable Patriarch – he firmly carried out what had been written in the County Act and stopped further panic, absurdity and self-degradation, caused by the ghost of an evil lecherous woman.

After *White-Deer Plain* was published, critiques followed immediately. Besides Confucian ideology which was interpreted as dominating the whole story, figurative language, characterization, and plot were all tremendously discussed. For example, Liu Lian and Zhu Yan purposed that the traditional chronological narrative pattern could hardly reveal the complexity of the political, economic and ideological conflicts intended in *White-Deer Plain*, thus, a spidery web was constructed in its narration - Bai Jiaxuan was the spider, around whom many threads were woven such as familial grudges, class struggles, and factional conflicts; characters were composed based on their ages, social status, political stands and their relations with Bai Jiaxuan (Liu and Zhu 107). In this "web", more than half a century's history was woven: warlord dogfights, two democracy

revolutions, and the Resistance War; they went side by side with the rises and falls of several interconnected families over three generations.

Yuan Hongtao pointed out that, different from previous family saga novels or even different from its contemporaries, *White-Deer Plain* seemed to emphasize the harmony brought by the rationalized clan system plus Confucian ethics (Yuan 85-86). In this novel, the family clan was the basic social unit and the Ancestral Temple was turned into a court or conference hall, where important things were discussed and improper deeds were brought to trial. This patriarchal system was inseparable from the private economy and had been integrated into the system of feudal bureaucracy; for example, when Bai Jiaxuan and Lu Zilin fought over that piece of land and planned to pursue a legal settlement, Mr. Zhu stepped in, persuading both sides to shake hands. The dispute was settled in compromise and this self-regulating administration was highly praised by the county government. This has further proved what Max Weber once observed, "[a Chinese] village is a self-governing society far from the function of the old government. The regular government does not send its police or officials to the village to exert any control; instead, it legitimates its self-autonomy" (Weber 137). In *White-Deer Plain*, the representatives of this system were local gentries, elders, and patriarchs, such as Mr. Zhu, Mr. Leng, Bai Jiaxuan, and Lu Zilin. It was not until the end of the imperial dynasty that this village began to loose its peace and harmony. The establishment of the Republican system represented the change of the power structure and the intensification of national administration in basic social units, including the village. Modern education entered the life of the villagers, and new

political groups and competitions formed. The old balance or harmony was lost in the coercive interference of the state apparatus embodied in the conscription and taxation; the traditional life patterns centered on the Ancestral Temple vanished.

The local dialects and customs portrayed in *White-Deer Plain* won Chen Zhongshi the credit of "qinren zuojia" 秦人作家 (writers of the Qin area/culture). Shaanxi food, dialects, customs and emotional patterns were faithfully but artistically portrayed in *White-Deer Plain*. The opening sentence - "What made Bai Jiaxuan most proud of himself was the fact that he married seven women in his life" (7), is stimulating, and transmited a kind of information that this would be a patriarchal story reeking with mysterious anecdotes. The following description of how the six women died one after another had gradually satisfied the readers' curiosity of whether Bai Jiaxuan really "had a dog penis," as the local gossip went, which "was so long that it could circle around his waist. At the front end of it was a poisonous hook; whenever it entered the woman's body, it would smash up her liver, kidney and guts; and poison would be injected in" (9). This kind of gossip and folk culture could easily be associated with ignorance, absurdity and superstition, but full of conspiracy, stimulation, and inspiration to quickly get readers indulged in the story. The following successive description of those six women's deaths was inserted with another intriguing story of how the old man Bingde was struck by a weird disease and cured in an even more weird way by Doctor Leng:

> Dr. Leng put a piece of steel plate into Bingde's mouth and, with his left

> index finger, he pressed it against the lower jaw to make the mouth open to the maximum, while his right hand held a steel needle, burnt red over the flame of alcohol, and stuck it into Bingde's throat. Before everyone knew what happened, the needle had already been pulled out. A blue smoke was seen emerge from Bingde's mouth, smelling the odor of burnt flesh and skin. Dr. Leng said, "It is done. Release him," while cleaning his appliances… Bingde's twisted legs, arms and hands now relaxed and lay loosely on the Kang without move. A stream of black mucilage flowed out of his mouth…then Beingde's eyes slowly opened. (9)

In this way, the local culture was demonstrated to the readers: it is a combination of the respect for the recognized authority of the patriarch assisted by a set of Confucian ethic codes and the prevalent ignorance and superstition. What old man Bingde said upon his coming back to consciousness was exactly the language that won the credit for this novel: "Alas, my dear nephew Leng! I was ticking on the *Hell's King's Book of Births and Deaths* [Yanwang shengsibu 阎王生死簿]. Suddenly someone grabbed the writing brush away from my hand and directly stuck it into my throat. I said to the Hell's King that 'Look! Look! This is not my fault'" (9). This kind of language, ridden with folk humor and knowledge, is everywhere in this novel.

Besides the local dialects, figurative language was amply used in this novel to avoid sensitive topics or to intensify the artistic effect; for example, when Bai Jiaxuan visited Mr. Zhu for advice,

> They sat on the straight-back chairs at the side of the table. Between them in the middle was a basin of charcoal fire. It burnt silently, without smoke and flame. On the surface of the burnt ash, the wood grain could be seen. Without flame, the fire made people feel warmth. (397)

The "charcoal fire" was the illumination of Mr. Zhu's personality and lofty spirit. He was like a fire without flame: self-cultivation with inward astringency. He did everything to help settle disputes, to educate young generations, to edit local chronicles, and to mobilize masses to fight against Japan and support Mao Zedong's revolutions, but he never claimed rewards or privileges. He was visited for advice by local patriarchs, warlords and government officials but he insisted to be an ordinary person and led a simple life.

Metaphors and puns were also embodied in the following sentences: "you, the army corps commander, could even be blocked by my two watching dogs; if they were tigers, the possibility of your entering my door was even slimmer" (Chen, "*White-Deer*" 498). This sentence was spoken by Mr. Zhu when the army corps commander of the Nationalist army visited him for advice on whether he was able to capture the city defended by the Communist army; because he was stopped from entering Mr. Zhu's yard by the two dogs watching the door, it was reasonable for Mr. Zhu to play such a joke; but at the same time this sentence was a pun to have transmitted a message that the Nationalist army could not capture the city because one of the commanders defending the city was named "tiger".

3.2.3 Su Tong's *Rice*

Rice chronicles a family, tempered by hatred, desire, greed, murder and self-destructiveness, in a depressive era spanning from the 1910s to the 1930s. Nothing beautiful happened in this Fang family composed of a widower, Proprietor Feng, and his two daughters, Cloud Weave and Cloud Silk, who owned a rice shop, Great Swan Rice Emporium. Proprietor Feng and his younger daughter Cloud Silk were busy with the maintenance of the rice business, while Cloud Weave, the elder daughter, was busy with her sexual affairs with Master Six, a local notorious gentleman, who was "more wealthy and influential than the emperor", based on Proprietor Feng's judgment (Su, "*Rice*" 31). Proprietor Feng was mean, obscene and greedy, and the two daughters were bullies and petty whiners looking down upon each other. Instead of enjoying the happy and admirable life usually associated with the owner of a rice shop, this family led a messy, tedious, inimical and isolated life, without love or emotion among the members. To make things worse, this family was doomed as Five Dragons' feet "crossed the threshold of the Great Swan Rice Emporium" (27). Five Dragons was an orphan from a rural place called Maple Poplar Village. In order to survive the starvation affecting his native town, he hopped onto a freight train for the city and slept at the door of Feng's rice shop for several nights in succession. He was hired by Proprietor Feng in exchange for food. Constantly insulted, snubbed, smacked and ordered around, Five Dragons gradually developed a hatred for this family and his revenge was gradually realized through his marrying Cloud Weave first, surviving his father-in-law then, and finally marrying Cloud Silk after Cloud

Weave left for shelters in Master Six's. He inherited the rice shop in the end. Yet, what sustained Five Dragons' hope when he was starving, humiliated and in desperation was not love but hatred; in the same way, what put Cloud Weave and Cloud Silk in subordination to Five Dragons was not admiration but fear and a desperation for survival in an age of war, starvation, flood, and a masculine culture. The most disturbing feature with this novel was its persistence in portraying darkness, cruelty and desperation; the tone was not sober but ironically comic and cold. This demonstrated the author's refusal to accept salvation or mercy.

Tyranny meant enforcement and violence from a higher position to the lower ones; it also meant that the ruler used power in an oppressive or unjust manner and was less likely to gain respect or obedience from the people below him. In Su Tong's *Rice*, Proprietor Feng was a pitiable tyrant in his family. He was cunning and shrewd enough to take advantage of the famine and Cloud Weave's sexual relationship with the head of the local sinister gangs, but he had never been respected and loved by his two daughters and people around him; when his power fell in Five Dragons' hands, the latter demonstrated a crueler and more merciless aspect - not only to the Feng family but also to his own sons. Hence, Five Dragons was turned into a symbol of a devil, who was born of brutalities that people did to him and paid them back in a more intensive degree.

In *Rice*, there are no positive characters. People establish relationships through reciprocity or hatred. The merit of Su Tong's *Rice* lies in its thoroughness in refusing to compromise with orthodox ethics by refusing to admit the existence

of moral models and codes and, thus, salvation to the degenerated human beings. Although Cloud Silk had never been afraid of Five Dragons as she declared to him, she was herself no better than a devil; and her fight with Five Dragons was at most an internal conflict between a fierce devil and a pertinacious devil. When Cloud Silk cried at what a bad luck she and her sister had (204), no readers might spare any sympathy to her or anything that happened in this family. The two physically as well as psychologically deformed sons were the victims of both Five Dragons' brutality and Cloud Silk's indecency. The last scene of the novel, Five Dragons' younger son pulled out his golden teeth upon his death, was revealing: the loop of the demon had been put around the humans' necks; the product of brutality was nothing but new brutality and its taxonomic groups; and the wealth built upon evil was itself destructive, which would lead to "new forms of torture" (Su, "*Rice*" 200).

3.2.4 Ge Fei's *Enemy*

In Ge Fei's *Enemy*, murder demonstrates its other facets through Zhao Shaozhong's years of impassibility to his children, indifference to the women who dedicated their lives to him, and his possible incest with his daughter-in-law. All this information is delivered in a fragmented and ambiguous way. Lifelessness, uncertainty, horror, absurdity and misfortune permeate the whole story, while death advances at a steady pace towards the Zhao family in either a predictable way or mysteriously.

The novel does not tell how the Zhao family was developed into a big family

that "all the villagers depended on…for a living" but starts with a big fire that had destroyed its old prosperity and announced the commencement of its decline (Ge, "*Enemy*" 29). There is no direct description of how the younger generations of this family were murdered and by whom, but starting from the youngest one in this family, the grandson, who might be the product of Zhao Shaozhong, or any other ship owners, with Shaozhong's daughter-in-law, death began to visit this family. The second son died mysteriously, followed by the second daughter. Finally, it was the eldest son whose death was predicted by a blind monk: it would come no later than the fifteenth of January on the lunar calendar. Every day was spent in horror. It seemed that the predict would be proved to be a mistake, then the eldest son was murdered, not by anyone else, but by his own father, Zhao Shaozhong, who seemed to have been bewitched by the blind monk's prophecy or the horror of deaths in succession. However, the concluding scene was not his grief upon his eldest son's death but his seemingly revived energy to have sex with the woman called Aunty Cui, the only survivor of the Zhao family besides Zhao Shaozhong himself. Aunty Cui was previously a prostitute, with whom Zhao Shaozhong once spent one night, when he passed by her water town, which was famous for prostitution and whoring. He brought her home because she did not ask for money from him to give it to the boss of the brothel and was driven out. Contrary to what the reader might expect, Zhao Zhaozhong did not have any sex with Aunty Cui for several decades while she lived in his big house as the major servant. She lived in the servants' sheds, where she remained hardworking, caring, and fearless. In the end, she was taken as the dearest to the younger generation.

She seemed to have been living in hopelessness that Zhao Shaozhong might notice her existence someday. The last scene seems to imply that Zhao Shaozhong had been waiting for this moment for almost all his life until all his children died so that he could have sexual affairs with a prostitute without worrying about scandals or curses; however, there was another possibility that in order to avoid being murdered, he murdered his last threat in the Zhao family. The fire at the beginning of the story was a curse on the later generations of the Zhao family, especially on Zhao Shaozhong; he was totally controlled by the question since then: who was the enemy of the Zhao family? Zhao Shaozhong kept crossing out the names on a piece of paper, suspicious of the crime. The end of the story seems to indicate that in the process of searching for our enemies, we ourselves have already become the enemies of others or of ourselves.

The merit of *Enemy* lies in the ambiguity between the reality and allusion and between the sub-consciousness and consciousness. "It seems to be unreal" is a frequently used phrase in this novel. Through this meta-fictional manner, the author seems to indicate that he is exploring something more real than it seems to be; or there should be something truer under the cover of rationalized reality.

Zhao Shaozhong, the father or the head of the big family, is the centre of the narration, around which other family members' activities and mysterious deaths happened. However, contrary to the traditional paradigm, *Enemy* does not portray Zhao Shaozhong, the main protagonist, in a strong color, as most of the family saga novels did; instead, he was almost the least described character in this novel, dominated by a gloomy mood, uncertain tone, desperate anxiety, and a dim color.

Zhao Shaozhong, the centre of this narrative seems to purposefully hide himself or isolate the Zhao family in order to avoid further hurt from the hidden enemy, but his way of heading his family and dealing with family members turns out to be exactly murdering, invisible but persistent.

3.2.5 Yu Hua's *Cries in the Drizzle*

Whenever Yu Hua is mentioned, his masterpiece *To Live* is an unavoidable topic. Published in 1992 and the winner of Italy's Premio Grinzane Cavour in 1998, *To Live* is an optimistic manifesto to fight against the mercilessness and unpredictability of fate. If there is a tyrant in this epic-like family saga novel, it is the mercilessness of power struggles embodied in such historical events: the Resistance War, the Nationalist-Communist Civil War, the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Great Leap Forward movement, and the GPCR. Fugui, the narrator of this story, once led a carefree life when he was young, as the son of a rich landlord. Gambling led himself and his family into pennilessness; since then tragedies began to fall on him in the form of successive deaths: his father, mother, 13-year-old son, deaf-mute daughter, wife, son-in-law, and seven-year-old grandson. In the end, he alone was left with an ox as his company for the rest of his life. Although *To Live* continued the theme of death and tragedy which dominated Yu Hua's early works, it was more about compromises between the cruelty of reality and human's best wishes for a happy life. *To Live* was a bitter smile and mild resistance to all human evils and disasters through staying alive and forgiveness.

In a strict sense, *To Live* could be taken as the transition from Yu Hua's fierce iconoclasm of cursing the darkness of human nature and society to the mild acceptance of disasters and tragedies with generosity and dignity. This transition was once overtly discussed by Yu Hua himself in the interview with Michael Standaert: "after 1990, when I finished *To Live* and *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, I started to write in a plain and less elaborate style because I started to hear the voice of my characters…I became the characters of my own works" (Standaert para. 25).

His first novel *Cries in the Drizzle* continued the theme of violence, death, and brutality, mostly recognizable with his early published short stories, such as "The Inescapable Fate" [Zaijienantao 在劫难逃], "The Year of Nineteen Eighty Six" [1986 Nian 1986年], "A Kind of Reality" [Yizhong xianshi 一种现实] and "Blood and Plum Blossoms" [Xianxue meihua 鲜血梅花]. Yu Hua's following confession was the reflection of the theme in these works, "violence is filled with passion and its force comes from the internal desire. This makes my heart intoxicated and soul possessed" (Yu, "*Whether*" 162). He once discussed, "when I no longer trusted some of the realities in daily life, I was forced to notice the other side of reality, which directly induced me to extremity of disorder and violence" (Yu, "Hypocritical" 46).

The theme of a tyrant father was continued in this family saga novel, which spanned from the 1960s to the early 1980s, an age of poverty, absurdity, and turbulence. The story was started in an unspeakably fearful atmosphere: a female cry was constantly heard from far away and an unknown man in a black gown

died under a big spider web. "I", Sun Guanglin, the protagonist and the narrator of this novel, was the second son in the Sun family. He was given up by his own family but had to be returned five years later at the age of 12 when tragedy befell his adoptive family. The first treatment Sun Guanglin received from his own father, Sun Guangcai, was a hostile suspicion that he, together with his grandfather, had set fire to their old house and burnt it down; then he was beaten up by his father due to his two brothers' conspiracy; and in the end, due to his reluctance to help his own family to fight against their neighbors, he became a thoroughly disreputable person in the eyes of his own family and among the villagers. His father was not only eager to get rid of him forever but also shamelessly slept with a widow who lived opposite their house for the first half night and returned home to sleep with his own wife for the second. Upon the death of his youngest son, the father's first response was not grief but a demand for the glory of a hero's father, because his eight-year-old youngest son was drowned while saving another kid. He fanatically waited to be invited to Beijing for an interview as a hero's father and thus turned himself into a spectacle due to his fantasy and absurd behavior. In the end, his eldest son, his hope and ally, could not bear his stupidity any more. Conflict arose between them. In the end, the father's one ear was cut off by his eldest son for his sexual harassment to his eldest son's wife, and he died in the cesspool.

In an iconoclastic attitude, Yu Hua had built a vulgar, cruel, ignorant, selfish, and patriarchal father in the socialist Chinese rural areas. His wickedness came from his bullying and brutality to the old, young, and female in the family, who

were physically inferior to him; and his vulgarity lay in his barefaced lust for women and the praise from the government at the death of his own eight year old son. Everything associated with this father was filthy and scornful; and nothing happening in the protagonist's childhood and adolescence was heart-lightening: he was bullied by his elder brother and hated by his father when he was very young; when he was big enough to tell dignity from shame, his mother was beaten and pressed under a notorious widow's bottom but his father and elder brother both refused to lend a hand because both of them had slept with that widow; when he grew mature enough to notice the beauty of Feng Yuqing, she was induced by a bad guy in the village and became a secret prostitute later in the town; when he, several years later, established an affinity with Feng's son Lulu, she was put in jail for her prostitution and Lulu, with his amazing independence and braveness, traveled a long way to find her; when he began to feel the sexual urge and secretly set up an idol of purity, Cao Li, she proved to be licentious in the relationship with the music teacher and was kicked out of the school early in her life and hastily got married; the only friendship or warmth he could find in his childhood and adolescence was Su Yu, but he was sent to jail due to his pubertal sexual spurt before he finished middle school and died at nineteen due to the rupture of a blood vessel in the brain. The whole story of this novel is, thus, gloomy, filled with turbulence, violence, absurdity, and cruelty. The overall tone is set at the very beginning by the sentence, "there is nothing more horrible than the lonely and helpless howl in the rainy and dark night" (Yu, "*Cries*" 2).

In this novel, time has lost its traditional concept. It is written out of memory

rather than the logic of narration. Memory does not spring in logic or chronology. It is driven by emotion. Therefore, this novel is a series of flashbacks connected by the author's own memorial logic. This is a good way to achieve flexibility without the loss of the completeness of his intended narration; in doing so, the author paradoxically achieves an authenticity in a detached manner. The following anecdote is a good example to show how the protagonist can escape from the narrative setting to become a commentator as well as narrator:

> That widow came up from the ridge of the field with a grand air. Her manner made mother shiver in anger. The accumulated hatred guided the ladle full of dung in her hand to be thrown at that widow's beamish body. That widow shrilled like a brass trumpet: "fuck your eyes!" Mother blasted out fiercely: "why didn't you go to the city and lie on the ground to let all men line up to fuck you?" "Ugh….." that widow did not show any weakness, "what quality do you have to say this to me? Go back to wash yourself. Your man said that your pussy stank up to the sky." The two women cursed each other in their loudest voice like two "quack, quack" ducks, and the whole village was turned into noise and chaos. (117)

In such a cold, detached and even ironic tone, the narrator, the "son" of that woman who was insulted in such a startling way in the story, situated himself more in the position of the author, the observer and the commentator, rather than the protagonist. In this way, time has lost its traditional concept in deciding the

narrative sequence; instead, it becomes a tool to achieve the purpose of writing history: to break rationality, to disorder logic, and to find happiness in the exposition of cold-bloodiness, selfishness, vulgarity, violence, and destruction – the qualities hostile to human beings but never defeated by human beings.

As to the subjectivity of time and space demonstrated through the narrative style adopted in this novel, there is a meta-fictional discussion in the novel itself. It was made upon the death of the protagonist's younger brother:

> my younger brother calmly went out of his room in that summer when he lost his life; he went out his room thousands of times in that way; however, the consequence of his death changed my memory on the way he left his room. When thinking back all the way and seeing Sun Guangming at the end of my memory, I found that what my younger brother went out was not his room but time. Once he was expelled from the kingdom of time, he was static, but we had to move forward, driven by the continuity of time. (39)

In this way, both the intro- and extra- textualities are achieved through the overlapping of the narrator, the protagonist, the author, and the commentator, whose inter-changeable roles turn this piece of narration into a mixture of memoir, literary critique, and fiction.

3.2.6 Alai's *Red Poppies*

Red Poppies was Alai's first novel. It was rejected by numerous Chinese

publishers for a number of years due to its sensitive political content. However, once it was published by People's Literature Publishing House in 1998, it immediately became a bestseller in China and was awarded the Mao Dun Literature Prize in 2000. In America, it was selected as a Los Angeles Times Book of the Year and a finalist for the Kiriyama Prize.

In Alai's *Red Poppies*, the struggle for territory and power was the most sensitive topic, closely associated with the history of Tibet and the relationship between Tibet and the Han government, which was first of all hinted by the protagonist's familial composition: Chieftain Maichi was from a distinguished Tibetan family, while his wife was from a poor Han family, and their son, an intelligent idiot, was allegorically the result of integrated alliance and betrayal. Although the story was mainly set in the time of the Republican period, it suggested historical events in Tibet as early as in the Tang Dynasty, when Sontzen Gampo conquered all other small tribes and established for the first time a central government in the area of Tibet – the Tubo Dynasty. After the Tubo Dynasty was established, Sontzen Gampo sent messengers to the Han government of the Tang Dynasty to propose an alliance, and as an agreeable response, Emperor Taizong married Princess Wencheng to Sontzen Gampo. In 649, the Tang government awarded Sontzen Gampo with the title of Captain of the Emperor's Son-in-law and King of the Western Sea. In 1716, when the Zhunger Army invaded Tibet, the Tibetan government once again sought military support from the Qing government. The Qing government sent armies and defeated the Zhunger Army in 1724. In 1750, the system of High Commissioners in Tibet was set up, and after

the Republic of China was established in 1911, the Department of Mongolia and Tibetan Affairs was set up and in 1912, the Office of the Central Government in Tibet formally became one provision written in the Republican constitution. Parallel to its relationship with the central government of different imperial dynasties was the relationship Tibet had with the British government. As early as 1814, the British armies began to step on part of Tibet; after they had colonized India in 1856, they controlled Sikkim in Tibet and appointed their commissioners there in 1887. Based on this, they expanded their power and territory in Tibet. That might be why in *Red Poppies* the idiot also had a sister who was taken to the United Kingdom from India by her uncle and never wanted to come back to Tibet.

Spanning a decade or so before the victory of the Communist revolution in 1949, Alai's *Red Poppies* told a story of power struggles between the Tibetan tribes and the Han government and the internecine rivalries among the fifteen chieftains in Tibet; lust, vengeance, double-crosses, hatred, murder and religious struggles were interwoven as the story ploughed all the way through the years of the decline of the Qing Dynasty, the emergence of the Nationalist and Communist parties, the Japanese invasion, and finally the civil war between "the white" (Nationalists) and "the red" (Communists).

Before the introduction of poppies by the Han nationalists into this piece of peripheral land, it seemed to be governed more in a natural and autonomous manner, with a set of feudal rules and a thinly scattered populace of peasant farmers, merchants, lamas and family servants. In order to seek alliance with the Han government, the Maichi chieftain made a deal with the Nationalist official,

the Special Emissary Huang: the Maichi family agreed to grow poppies in its wide territory and process the berries into opium, while the Guomingdang official provided the Maichi chieftain with the technical know-how, protected Chieftain Maichi's monopoly on the trade, and supplied the Maichi family with modern weapons for exchange. The result was the enormous increase of the Maichi's power and wealth and the emergence of commodity exchange and trade in the border area of Tibet, which paradoxically announced the end of the natural and primitive subsistence-farming economy and led to the fall of the Maichi Empire and the feudal serfdom system.

"I" – the idiot son of Chieftain Maichi and his Han wife, was the narrator of this engrossing epic-like family saga novel. The father was still ambitious and powerful when the story started, though aging and the growing-up of his two sons, the new conquering heroes, had announced the moment of his retreat. Although he disapproved of his elder son's lack of wisdom, which was overly demonstrated in his comments - "Does he think he can rule a country just by knowing how to fight?" (41) - he was also frustrated by another son's idiocy. To make things worse, the father was captivated by the lust for his most faithful headman's wife. He had the headman executed and fell in the ocean of raging sexual desire with the dead man's widow, Yangzom, whose appearance in Chieftain Maichi's life was as disastrous as the poppy seeds given by the Special Emissary Huang and grown in Chieftain Maichi's wide territory.

The inexorable doom of the father's empire was announced at the very beginning by Living Buddha Jeeka. He warned the chieftain of the "corrupting

influence" of poppies, but was awarded with the warning to care for his own head; then weird things happened: the earth, "the most stable thing in the world" (Alai, "*Red*" 64) began to shake; "snakes were coming out of their holes"; "dogs were climbing trees like cats"; "many sightless things that should have remained underground were emerging"; and a lost ballad was suddenly sung by a group of young slaves who had never seen or heard this ballad before and nobody had ever taught them (65). Hearing the ballad sung by this group of ignorant slaves, Living Buddha Jeeka fell in panic; he hurried to the palace of Chieftain Maichi to speak out the destructive omen that "the calamity is about to occur" (67). However, his advice and prophecy were not welcome; instead, Monpa Lama, who had been ignored for some years, came up with stories pleasing to the chieftain's ears; he was gradually favored, although the chieftain knew clearly that "he doesn't mean what he says" (80). Wangpo Yeshi, a scholar-lama with a ***geshe*** degree from Lhasa and the determination to proselytize Geluk doctrines, was twice severely punished by the chieftain for his offensive remarks. The first time was due to his "attack on the religion" that had been "followed for generations" in Maichi's territory (160), and his tongue was cut off, as announced by Chieftain Maichi that "You harbor crazy thoughts in your head, but we find only your tongue to be responsible for the nonsense you've spouted" (160). Several years later, after "his wound had healed and the tongue was a tongue again" (167), this tongue was cut off again for alarming prophecies, such as "it won't be long before chieftains disappear from the land" (167).

Although Wangpo Yeshi could explain the demise of the Maichi family from

a geo-political point of view that "neither the eastern nor the western neighbors will tolerate the existence of a local overlord" (167), "I", the idiot son of the chieftain, who had made marvelous miracles on the road leading to the unprecedented glory of the Maichi family, was personally taken as the incarnation of the omen. In the end, the chieftain realized that "I", his idiot son, was "not an idiot" but "an immortal" (375). He exclaimed "why did the gods send you down to the human world? [...] You had been sent on a mission to bring an end to an era" (375). The frustration felt by the father and expressed to "me", the idiot, that "why can you see the future, but not the present?" (375) was typical of the mentality of the person in power; it could also be taken as the jeer at the emptiness of power struggle by an idiot, who was able to see through the mortal world as an immortal but was satisfied with the identity of an idiot.

The dialectical relationship between the prophet and an idiot was meta-fictionally discussed by the idiot – the narrator – himself: "One of my ancestors was a dedicated writer. He once said that you had to be either the smartest fellow in the world or an idiot if you wanted to be a ruler, a king" (99); he further postulated that "An idiot has no strong loves or hates, and can see nothing but basic truths. That, in turn, keeps his fragile heart relatively safe from harm" (53); in the end, his theory on the dynamics between the prophet and an idiot was finalized through the illumination of his dual missions:

> I'd been an idiot all my life, but now I knew I was neither an idiot nor a smart person. I was just a passerby who came to this wondrous land when

> the chieftain system was nearing its end…Yet heaven had let me see and let me hear, had placed me in the middle of everything while having me remain above it all. It was for this purpose that heaven had made me look like an idiot. (429)

"Red poppies" was a trope, denoting lust and ruin. This point was aesthetically transmitted through the following sentences that "the giant red flowers formed a spectacular carpet across much of Chieftain Maichi's territory…captivated us" and "drew out the madness hidden in the people's marrow" (46, 51). Raging sexual desires were stirred by its intoxicating fragrance; murders happened due to its profits; starvation fell because all lands were planted with poppies; and syphilis and wars broke out due to its "corruptive influence" (64). In the end, Chieftain Maichi's wife committed suicide by eating an overdose of opium, fulfilling a metaphor that she was the only Han descendant in Chieftain Maichi's clan who used opium first, and her Chinese birth was also the origin of the poppy disaster, and her death resulting from the overdose of opium was, thus, the righteous penalty.

In this novel, lust and greed were criticized as the root of destruction in a melodramatic way. When Chieftain Macchi and Yangzom, the wife of the executed headman, dashed into the crazed poppy field with raging sexual urge and tried to find a spot to lie down in,

> the empty spaces were all taken up by animals of unknown origin…when

> Yangzom lay down on a grassy spot, she leaped up, screaming as she brushed voles from under her skirt. The chieftain was forced to prop her up against a tall Chinese larch tree. But as soon as she hiked up her skirt and he dropped his pants, their lower bodies were assaulted by ants and angry cuckoos. (68)

In the end, they had to give up their attempt to have sex in the wild. The author's contempt for this destructive and blood-stained passion was also illustrated through the plot that Chieftain Maichi quickly lost his interest in Yangzom and their baby died at birth.

Women were still not a welcome topic in this novel. Chieftain Maichi's Yangzom and the idiot's wife Tharna were all the same: they were the incarnated red poppies, unearthly beautiful but unprecedentedly destructive. In the end, the narrator - the idiot and the protagonist - concluded that "there wasn't much difference between her, a woman taken by force by the chieftain, and my mother, who had been bought" (68). Women's vagina was compared to a "beast's mouth" (49) swallowing wisdom and "drawing out the madness hidden in the people's marrow" (51); Yangzom, the dead headman's wife was overtly compared to a demon (68), whose body emitted "a seductive, animal-like smell" (62); and "Tharna [the idiot's wife] had committed adultery - again!' (414) was spoken by her husband, the idiot, in an ironic yet lighthearted way.

Through advocating the self-appropriating power of the balanced universe, *Red Poppies* might have introduced a new approach to the understanding of the

relationship between the marginalized/peripheral cultures and the Han or Communism dominated culture; it implied that the truth might lie in the previously neglected populace and area. These neglected populaces and areas were ironically refered to as "barbaric" in *Red Poppies*; however, this concept was not statically applied to certain areas or populaces but used in a dynamic way, reflecting a process and inter-reliable relationship among different powers - the Han Chinese considered Tibetans "barbaric"; the English regarded the Han Chinese "barbaric"; and the narrator's sister, who was born by two Tibetans but brought up first in the colonized India and then the United Kingdom, even thought China, her native country, was "barbaric".

To Alai's non-official or peripheral interpretation of the relationship between the Communist and Nationalist parties or between Tibet and the Chinese central government, Yue Gang's comment was quite insightful: in an age "in which the ecclesiastic Buddhism of Tibet has become the darling of Western new-age dreamers and cold-warriors alike, it is refreshing to hear a novelistic echo of the voice of traditional and folk wisdom" (Yue 559). This "folk wisdom" was specifically outspoken by Wangpo Yeshi, the idiot's private historian in the novel: "whatever the people believed would happen sooner or later, even if it didn't make much sense. So many people talking about the same thing amounted to chanting the same incantation to express a common wish to heaven" (Alai, "*Red*" 392).

The failure experienced by both Wangpo Yeshi and the British Christian missionary to convert the Maichi people was also worthwhile to think about. It

touched the essence of the controversies around Tibet for a long time: religion, autonomy, identity and territory. In the form of fiction, Alai's *Red Poppies*, in Yue Gang's words, presented a world "in which notions of the center and the periphery need to be understood as embedded within a layered power structure of national-ethnic hierarchy and cultural nuances" (Yue 563). Yet, different from Yue's political interpretation of Alai's *Red Poppies* was Trevor Carolan's innocent approach, which says, "in *Red Poppies*, Alai impastos a profoundly impressionistic portrait in which Buddhism and Bon shamanism contend in displays of one-upmanship and in which serfdom, slavery, casual brutality, ritualized murder, mate stealing, and the worst of sexual exploitation flourish under tribal patriarchies - something between the old Scottish highlands and honor-obsessed Sicily" (Carolan 204).

3.2.7 Su Tong's *My Life as Emperor*

The father in *My Life as Emperor* died at the very beginning of the novel, which made possible all the political struggles and conspiracies for the crown. It was obviously a conspiracy that "I", Duanbai, the late emperor's fifth son, could be selected as the successor. This conspiracy was destined to be ended in blood and revenge. It was Duanbai's grandmother Madam Huangfu and his biological mother Madam Meng who together had falsified the edict of the deceased Xie Emperor (燮王) and enthroned Duanbai – a fourteen year old boy who knew nothing about politics and was still indulged in playing with crickets. In this way, both of them were able to hold court from behind a screen.

Narrated in the first person by Duanbai, *My Life as Emperor* chronicled the twist of life of a young ruler of an imagined Chinese empire in no particular historical time. This novel was roughly composed of three parts: Prince Duanbai's succession to the throne and the ensuing rivalries with his half brothers Duanwu and Duanwen, who was actually the named successor to the throne by the deceased Xie Emperor; the palace intrigues among the imperial women, the dangers that the empire had to face, and Duanbai's loss of the throne; Duanbai's life as a commoner in exile and the final destruction of the Xie Empire.

The worthwhile point with this novel was the change of the tone in correspondence with the change of the protagonist's political status. Before ascending to the throne, the protagonist was naïve and childish, just like a spoiled prince and curious teenager; for example, he enjoyed playing with crickets and hated royal rituals and court ceremonies; when on the throne and witnessing the cruelty of political struggles on the very first day of his emperor's life and later palace intrigues, the protagonist became cruel and cold-blooded, which might be essential for the maintenance of his ultimate power; for example, the first imperial act of this boy-emperor was to cut off the tongues of the concubines confined in the cold palace, because their sorrowful wailing disturbed his sleep, and his order to torture the defeated rebel leader Li Yizhi was also startling; however, when expelled from the palace by his half brothers through a successful coup, the former cruel emperor but now in exile astonishingly developed a tenderness embodied in his relationship with his faithful eunuch Swallow and other ordinary peoples.

The story was started in a tragic atmosphere that "calamity will soon befall the Xie Empire" (Su, "*My*" 5). It was the predict of Sun Xin, a mad alchemist and attendant of the deceased Xie Emperor but innocently spoken out by "me" at the very beginning of the story, even before the news of the late Xie Emperor's death. Later on, this omen was gradually realized through series of conspiracies, murders, and revenges. Madam Yang was the first to be sacrificed. She crazily jumped out on "my" inauguration day and, waving a piece of paper in her hand, exposed that the announced edict was a falsified one and her son Duanwen should be the decreed successor, as written in the late emperor's edict. As a result, she was buried alive as the sacrificial object together with other seven concubines. After Duanbai ascended to the crown, intrigues and enmities between Madam Huangpu and Duanbai's biological mother became fierce and many eunuchs and royal ladies got involved; Duanwu and Duanwen sought every possibility to revolt; and it was an age full of peasant upheavals and wars among small kingdoms. Situated in such an environment, plus his hopeless love for Lady Hui who was persecuted by both Madam Huangpu and his mother, Duanbai, on the one hand, was able to do every possible cruelty due to his supreme power, but, on the other hand, he knew his empire was doomed and he longed for the freedom to be a tightrope walker, high in the sky like a bird.

Emphasized by Su Tong as "a pleasure cruise through my inner world" rather than a historical novel (Su, "*My*" 2), *My Life as Emperor* repeated an age-old theme that empire was tempting but treacherous. The uniqueness of the novel was not the description of moral degradation, brutality or naked ambition for power

but the realization of Su Tong's interpretation of history: it was no more than a game. It was realized through a series of metaphors or symbols. The shape of the Xie Empire's territory was previously like a bird, but in Duanbai's father's hand "its right wing was cut off by the Xu State" and then "its left wing was cut off by the Peng State in my hand" (139); without wings, how could a bird fly? Therefore, from the very beginning the omen was given that "calamity is to befall the Xie Empire" (5). Controlled by this theme, Duanbai's behavior after being pushed onto the throne was unexpectedly inconceivable, reckless and cruel, parodying the orthodox norm that an emperor should be self-disciplined and well-supervised in the administration of an empire. The ultimate effect of this parody was accomplished in what Madam Huangpu said to Duanbai: "This has all been a joke I played on you, the men. I created a false Xie emperor, one that I could control" (69). "I" in this sentence could be interpreted at least in two ways: it refers to an evil woman as the way it is in the story implying that women are usually the origin of disasters; on the other hand, this "I" could also be interpretaed as the author himself, who is "creating" a "false" history that he can control, mocking at the seriousness that was traditionally associated with the writing of history and implying that national affairs are no less than a game that can be played by a vicious woman or a puppet man.

The author's play with history was also achieved through the holistic narrative structure that a spoiled child was ignorantly pushed onto the seat of the throne, controlled by a group of vicious royal families and a calamitous fate of the empire, and finally disposed from the throne to become a tightrope walker in

order to make a living. It revealed a dual implication that to be an emperor requires superb skills akin to those of tightrope walking, and that an emperor is no more than a tightrope walker – they are two sides of one coin. This trope was substantialized through many narrative scenes; for example, after Duanbai asked his attendant Swallow to put on his dragon robe and golden crown, he was shocked to find that Swallow "looks as an emperor, and everyone knell down under Swallow's horse" (139); and the poems, the recording of his pure love for Lady Hui, were, at the end of the story, sold by Lady Hui, already a prostitute, in her advertising shouts, "these are the lascivious poems written by the Xie Emperor, authentic, authentic" (298).

According to Du Hua, *My Life as Emperor* is "a masterpiece of historical nihilism" (Du, "My" 24). Through its refusal to claim authenticity of time and space, it reveals that "human beings are disposed into this world of nothingness and absurdity. From the very beginning he or she was pushed around by fate and had to endure endless suffering brought by being in existence but ended up in nothingness" (24). The exile experienced by the emperor was both physical and spiritual, echoing an old theme initiated by the Bible that a tension has always existed between home and exile. By refusing to create an expected or stereotyped emperor, Su Tong has demonstrated his position of refusing to enter history to become one part of it; instead, he persistently holds onto the identity to be an autonomous commentator of "now", to explain and illustrate the nihilistic nature of the past/history.

To be in accordance with this nihilistic theme is the satirical writing style: the

only word repeated by the emperor in his unconsciousness was "kill" and the first word after he regained his consciousness was "fly"; these two words represented two totally different mentalities: brutality and humanity, which paradoxically resided in each other and ended up in nothingness and a reflection upon nothingness. The intimacy between the suffering emperor and his faithful attendant, the eunuch, might be another epiphany, revealing that only after a person was castrated he was freed from desire and evils, which formed a contrastive picture with what Lady Hui had experienced: she was favored by the emperor but degraded herself into a prostitute after escaping from the persecution from Madam Huangpu and Madam Meng, whose support to Duanbai was no more than finding a puppy for themselves to indulge in the game of power; Duanbai's final freedom and delight in being called the "Emperor of Tightrope" were even more allegorical and insightful, exposing the cruelty of history and political struggles; yet, Su Tong's cruelty did not stop here – he let Duanbai's last consolation, the Tightrope Emperor Traveling Circus, destroyed together with the Xie Empire. What had been left were a monastery, where Duanbai was inhabited, and a book, *The Analects* [Lunyu 论语], which might implicate a continual struggle of seeking truth through the emptiness of the material world.

3.2.8 Mo Yan's *Red Sorghum: A Family Saga*

Red Sorghum told a story of three generations. Set in Gaomi, a town in Northeastern China, where red sorghums were grown and formed "a glittering sea of blood", the story started with a group of villagers who were led by Commander

Yu, the narrator's Grandpa, to prepare to ambush the Japanese soldiers on the eve of World War II. Yu sent his 14-year-old son back home to get food for his men; however, when Yu's wife, Jiu'er, "my Grandma", returned with food through the sorghum fields, the Japanese started firing and she was killed. Her death set engine to a series of flashbacks made by the narrator, linking the past to the present through the narrator's descriptions of how the ambush led by Commander Yu was going on and back to the wars between the warlords and the emotional histories between grandpa and grandma.

Commander Yu, "my Grandpa", was a sedan bearer when he first met "my grandma", Jiu'er. He, with other sedan bearers, was carrying her to her bridegroom's home. He knew that the bridegroom was a leper, the son of a rich winery owner, and that Jiu'er was forced into this marriage in exchange for a mule. His sympathy for her changed into a sexual desire before the journey was ended. Either as a rebellion against her ill fate or as a natural act of her courageous personality, Grandma gave herself to Grandpa on her way home on the third day of her marriage. They had sex in the sorghum field and this was believed to be where the narrator's father was conceived. Jiu'er armed herself with a pair of scissors and nothing happened on her first two days in the leper's house; on the second day after she had sex with Grandpa, her leprous husband was mysteriously murdered and still later Grandpa knocked open the door of the winery whose owner had already been Jiu'er, and they lived together since then.

In this novel, Mo Yan created men and women protagonists in a very avant-garde manner. With many conflicting attributes, such as a laborer, a murderer, an

adulterer, a bandit, and a hero of the anti-Japanese resistance, "my" Grandpa was obviously the most "heroic and bastardly" man in this heroic land filled with masculine power and feminine beauty. "My" Grandma, through having sex with her sedan carrier on the way to her bridegroom's home and taking over the winery and thoroughly soaking it with liquor to give it a sterilization and new life, demonstrated a rare quality of a masculinized femininity to fight against ill fates and to ensure the continuation of life and love. Grandma's interior monologue when she was dying was quite illuminating and conclusive to her short life:

> Have I sinned? Would it have been right to share my pillow with a leper and produce a misshapen, putrid monster to contaminate this beautiful world? What is chastity then? What is the correct path? What is goodness? What is evil? You never told me, so I had to decide on my own. I loved happiness, I loved strength, I loved beauty; it was my body, and I used it as I thought right. Sin doesn't frighten me, nor does punishment. I'm not afraid of your eighteen levels of hell. I did what I had to do. I managed as I thought proper. I fear nothing. (Mo, "*Red*" 72)

David Der-wei Wang and Michael Berry once commented that "Mo Yan sees his family members on a larger-than-life scale, judging them not by what they do but by how they carry out their deeds" (Wang, "Imaginary" 134). Here the "family members" might be a metaphor for peasants or Chinese - in a more

general concept, and this "how" might refer to a primitive passion whose creativity could not be barely judged by the modern ethic standard, which had long been inscribed with political dogmas and lost the most fundamental concerns that should have been given to life.

In a strict sense, Mo Yuan's *Red Sorghum* has surpassed the general concept of "root-seeking", a comment usually associated with this novel by many critics; it has touched upon the most fundamental issues on the essence of life; it returns ethics to its most primitive state, free of reasoned arguments and sublimated dogmas; it activates the engine of primitive desire in the face of threats to survival, physically as well as spiritually. In Mo Yan's literary works, almost everyone has a strong personality: they love, hate, and take actions to satisfy their most basic needs. Civilized theories or refined political slogans have no place in their daily life; what they closely follow is to satisfy the most primitive and immediate need to live and to continue to live. *Red Sorghum* was actually a recalling of the primitivism embodied in femininity and masculinity, which should be taken as the essence of the universe but had been repressed by so-called civilization for a long time. Therefore, after Grandpa vulgarly pissed into the wine vats, the wine was not damaged; instead, his piss curiously produced the best wine the winery had ever made; Grandpa's virility was also embodied in his relationship with "my" second Grandma, Grandma's maiden, who was portrayed as a sexual woman, possessed by animal spirit, a symbol of evil longing for the beauty of love or sexuality in the mortal world; Grandma, showing no weakness, sought comfort from another man, a famous local bandit; however, after grandpa lost in the duel

to settle their emotional entangles, Grandma left that bandit and returned back to the defeated Grandpa, who had already won the respect of both the bandit and Grandma for his chivalrous spirit and courage; since then, Grandma's love for Grandpa was dimmed by her resentment for that "base-bred" woman and Grandpa's care for her and their daughter, who later both died of the brutality of the Japanese invaders: the daughter was split in half and the mother was gang-raped and died very quickly. Thus, in Gaomi, "the most beautiful and most repulsive, most unusual and most common, most sacred and most corrupt, most heroic and most bastardly, hardest-drinking and hardest-loving place in the world" (4), Mo Yan created a historical space, in which the traditional criteria to divide heroes and villains disappeared and the individuality once repressed by the sublimated collectivism or modernity re-emerged: ancestral worships, clan rituals, shamanism, totem, magic and superstition were parts of people's daily lives. It was a challenge to the alienated subjectivity or dehumanized persona; it was a re-creation of a new persona "made of flesh and blood, love and hatred, a being full of emotions and desires with a capacity for contemplation" (Dai 349). Therefore, David Der-wei Wang and Michael Berry concluded, "saying that Mo Yan's "root-seeking" works represent the reappearance of various styles and features of a certain geographic environment would not do as much justice to them as saying that they represent the central symbol of another time and space, thus fulfilling the category of dialectical historicism" (Wang and Berry 489).

In a bold and passionate way, Mo Yan has launched a campaign for the primitive masculinity and femininity. He exclaimed in *Red Sorghum* that "[our

elder generations] committed murders and robberies but they were all devoted patriots to their country. They distinguished themselves from the later generations by playing on series of prowess and dignity. Compared with them, I felt the shame of men's degeneration" (Mo, "*Red*" 2). Against this thematic background, red sorghums and the winery both obtained their metaphoric meanings: they represented the primitive passion and life force, like blood and the Dionysian carnality.

3.2.9 Mo Yan's *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*

The concepts of hybrid and men's "degeneration" were continuously discussed in Mo Yan's *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, which was published in 1995 and won Master · Red River Literature Prize. If the highlight in *Red Sorghum* was mainly on the energetic and heroic deeds of "my" grandparents' generation, in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* it was the divinity of femininity and the wretchedness of men that drew the attention of most of the readers.

A capital-lettered Mother was the hero in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*. She had nine children, but none was by her husband who was sterile. The youngest was her only boy, Shangguan Jintong, the narrator of the story, spoiled as a child and ineffectual as an adult. He stood in striking contrast to his iron-willed and physically strong sisters.

Also set in Gaomi, the fictional town in Northeastern China and where Mo Yan got his inspiration, this story covered a history of 100 years, from the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, through the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, the early years of

Sun Yat-sen's Republic, the Japanese invasion in the 1930s, the Nationalist versus Communist civil war, and the establishment of the GPCR, to the post-Mao years. Through a description of three generations' struggles of life and death in the waves of war, famine, and political movements, this novel created a meaning that was more than a breasts-and-hips-associated thriller could have done.

As the title suggested, this novel is first and foremost about women. Big breasts and wide hips stir sensuality but also transmit a sublime motif: matriarchy and life force. Breasts in various shapes and sizes were described in this novel through Jintong's eyes: the eldest sister Laidi's "breasts jutted out proudly" (Mo, "*Big*" 99); the second sister Zhaodi's "breasts were the size of pears, beautifully shaped" (135); the third sister Lingdi's breasts "were delicate, lovely, perky, with slightly upturned nipples as nimble as the mouth of a hedgehog" (180); the fifth sister Niandi's "breasts were fierce and intimidating; as if filled with gas" (201); the sixth sister Niandi's "breasts [are] high arching, nipples like cherries"(226); the seventh sister Qiudi's "breasts [were] made full from the sixty-eight eggs she'd eaten" (422); Old Jin's left breast "was flat as a whetstone, which made the right breast seem to stick up…like a lonely hill on the plains" (255); Commander Long's breasts "protruded hard and heavy, like the weights of a scale" (423); and Jintong's ex-wife's falsies protrude "like little umbrellas" (523). In this way, breasts had been turned into the symbols of women's personalities and the eyes of the narrator to observe the inner world of the women and the world around these women: men, women, nature, history and politics.

In this novel, it was the women who made choices and met destinies. With

big breasts and wide hips, which signify "mountains and the earth" (Mo, "*Big*" 51), these women attracted or were attracted by men, who were manly enough to explore the mystery of the mountains and the fertility of the earth. This point was exactly illuminated by Xu, a blind man in the novel, who said to Niandi, the fifth sister, "you and the rest of the Shangguans are impressive. When the Jap devils were here, your eldest brother-in-law…was in charge. Then during the reign of the Kuomintang, your second brother-in-law…ran roughshod over the area. Now you and Lu Liren are in charge. You Shangguans are flagpoles that cannot be cut down; boats that cannot be overturned" (Mo, "*Big*" 290). With their feminine bodies, outstanding personalities and strong desire for survival, these attractive and tough-willed women had established a matriarchal kingdom, in which they gave birth, bred lives, sought primitive sensual pleasure, and conquered or were conquered by men. In another word, they lived to the full of life.

Contrast to these outstanding Shangguan women, Shangguan men seemed little, cowardly and useless. Mother's husband, Shangguan Shouxi, and his father, Shangguan Fulu, were described as "weak father, weak son, accomplishing little with their soft hands—limp wicks, fluffy cotton, always careless and given to cutting corners" (Mo, "*Big*"9). Shangguan Jintong, the only son of Mother's nine children, was portrayed as never being able to get over the desire to suck on women's breasts. He was blamed by his Mother as "useless son" (451) and scorned by Old Jin as "dog shit that won't stick to a wall…a dead cat that can't climb a tree" (488).

Besides Shangguan Shouxi's sterility and Shangguan Jington's impotence,

the castration of masculinity was further parodied through the concept of hybridization; for example, Jintong's fifth sister Niandi, in order to create an unprecedented record to secure her position in the Revolutionary Committee, ordered that the bull's sperm be used to envelop the sheep's eggs and that the ram's sperm be merged with the rabbit's eggs, upon which the author expressed his mockery through an intellectual's mouth in the novel, "this is a farce" and "politics could not replace science" (412), to which Niandi responded boldly that "there is no science that transcends politics in the proletariat dictionary" (412). This historical anecdote upgraded the problem of castration and hybridization to a position associating with a nationa's politics and identity: how China should establish its image on a globalized political stage. Being Westernized was like the consequence of hybridization, mocked by Mo Yan as "Pastor Malory planted a dragon seed, but all he harvested was a flea" (499), but holding onto an old and paralyzed organism might also mean the sterility of a race.

Melanie Klein, a psychoanalyst, argued that the mother's body, especially the breast, was the field of exploration for the child's developing "epistemophilic impulse" – the urge to know (Klein 69-70). In the same way, women's breasts were taken as the source of the perception of the world in this novel. To Shangguan Jintong, the male protagonist and the narrator, women's breasts were essential throughout his life. From infancy, he demonstrated a strong desire to monopolize his mother's breasts, and milk was the only food that agreed with him even after he reached school age; when his health was deteriorated to almost beyond any hope, it was Single-Breast Old Jin's breast milk that saved him. Yet

his fetishistic obsession with breasts did not bring him ecstatic or fruitful sex. His two weird and freaky sexual experiences happened in the two most representative historical periods in China: the great famine in 1960 after the Great Leap Forward movement and the turbulent social transformations at the turn of the 1980s. The first period represented the deprivation of substance and the second period was normally associated with the dislocation of spirit. The first affair was initiated by a physically and sexually ravenous Communist commander, Long Qingping, who had only one arm; she attempted to force him into a sex with her, but accidentally shot herself after failing to seduce him. Out of sympathy, Jintong granted her final wish before her life slipped away. He was then sentenced to jail on charge of murder and necrophilia. After fifteen years of prison life, Jintong returned to a society that had changed beyond his recognition and adaptability. He was scared back into his infantile attachment to women's breasts. At this time, another woman appeared in his sexual history - Single-Breast Old Jin, who had only one breast and coveted Jingtong's handsome appearance for a long time; she became rich and had an upper hand in sexuality with men - due to her money and erotic passion. Through the arrangement of letting Jintong have sex with these two deformed and bizarre women, Mo Yan seemed to have provided a pathological explanation to the incapacitation of manhood; however, the association of man's incapacitation with political events seemed to make people think more.

Mo Yan is highly credited with his expertise in the manipulation of language, bloody scenes, wild imaginations, and figures of speech. In *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, breasts, which were sublimated as "love, poetry, the highest realm of heaven,

and the rich soil under golden waves of wheat" (Mo, "*Big*" 289), were also paradoxically endowed with most carnal aspects in this novel. The anecdote of Jintong playing the role of the Snow Prince in a local festival was startlingly sarcastic and ironic: women who wished to bear a child had to have their breasts fondled by the Snow Prince so that blessings would be bestowed on them. In such a cruel and funny manner, motherhood embodied in the sacred of breasts was mocked through the erotic and cathartic play on them by a man with breast mania and sexual psychopathy; yet Mo Yan was not satisfied with this mock; instead, he designed another more bizarre role for Jingtong to play: Jintong was appointed to be the manager of a bra shop in the economic frenzy of the 1980s. The business was founded by his cousin, Sima Liang, who wanted both to cure Jintong's neurosis and to exploit his expertise with women's breats: he paid one hundred women for their breasts to be touched, played and studied by Jintong. This, to some degree, has tartly criticized the degradation of morality brought by the commodity culture and market economy.

Contrary to readers' expectation that these strong willed and sexually bodied daughters might have distinguished deeds in their lives, they died or failed one by another in a society that seemed to have never been spared from sufferings and calamities. Mother seemed to be an indestructible woman in this novel which started from the Boxer Rebellion when Mother was six months old and ended with her death in 1993 in the care of her only son, Shangguan Jintong, in a church during a sermon, which, as it turned out, was preached by the eldest son of Jintong's biological father, Pastor Malor, a Swedish missionary. History seemed to

have played a joke on human beings who seemed to have never escaped the cyclical destructions brought by natural disasters or man-made calamities.

3. 3 Interactions between Literature and Society

Erik Mueggler argued, "as state power grew increasingly intimate" in post-Mao China, it also "became ever more elusive, more spectral, more difficult to grasp and comprehend" (Mueggler 287). Parallel to the negotiation and readjustment in economy and politics was the search in literature for proper maneuvers: how to catch the essence implied in Mao Zedong's "democratic movement under centralized leadership" and Deng Xiaoping's "socialist market economy". As more astonishing statistics were published and newly emerged national capitalists allied with government agencies and foreign investors, literary market also took on a decentralized landscape. Writers and critics studied Western theories and paradigms and incorporated them into the Chinese literary fibers against the void left by the demise of Mao's unified ideological discourse and canonized realistic paradigms.

What Marx and Engels attributed to the bourgeois epoch could exactly be applied to China in the 1980s and 1990s:

> Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation [...] All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before

> they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air; all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind. (Marx and Engels, "*Communist*" 28)

Based on a large-scale research involving both urban and rural communities and covering both the intellectual and working-class families, *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era* pointed out that "there is no single trend in Chinese family organization today, but rather a mosaic of forms and strategies that must be seen in the light of particular local conditions" (Davis and Harrell 4). The localization of the feature of the family organization was the result of the decentralization of economic structure and a release of the strict control of the central government in many aspects of life, which was somewhat a subversion of the practice which had lasted in China for centuries: a collective mentality for a coherent and powerful authority. In the 1980s-1990s, the legitimization of all possible self-benefitting enterprises that had once been suppressed for the benefit of the nation and the commons not only stimulated an overall development in economy but also a crisis for the authority: it might lose its previous controlling power as more and more local and private enterprises became thriving and a "crony capitalism" emerged, which was the result of "new combinations of economic power linked emergent entrepreneurs with established bureaucrats" (Naughton 37). As a result, the anxiety over the arbitrariness of history and the uncontrollability of one's fate in an age of social transformations became the main concern of almost all the family

saga novels published in the 1980s-1990s. A typical example was the anecdote about the coin tossed by Bai Ling and Lu Zhaohai in Chen Zhongshi's *White-Deer Plain*. The side with a dragon represented the Nationalist Party and the other side with a Chinese character represented the Communist Party (Chen, "*White-Deer*" 181). However, their fates turned out to be the opposite to the result of the tossed coin they bet on, and so were the fates of their siblings or cousins. The final result was that the innocent were executed but the sneaky ones were prosperous.

The family saga novels took on a new dimension in the 1980s-1990s, when, as described by Zhang Qian Forrest, "not only is allocation of economic resources increasingly integrated through markets; the state has also considerably reduced its provision of social services, leaving many families exposed to the perils of markets" (Zhang, "Economic" 1321). With the advancement of market economy, together with the reduction of governmental interventions, the traditional family, established upon the biological/affinal relationship, could no more meet the demand for a more powerful economic joint venture required by an age of economic reforms which more emphasized the "household" as an economic corporation. As pointed out earlier in this dissertation, the average population of the urban family in the early twentieth century was 4-5 people; after years of effort in the work of family planning, which had been taken as a national policy and written into the 1982 national constitution, the nuclear family was the dominant pattern in China in the 1980s-1990s. According to the census made in 1990, the size of the family was 3.92 persons, compared with 3.44 persons in the census made in 2000; in the census made in 2006, the figure was 3.13 persons in

each family (*China Daily*, updated on January 3, 2008). In a strict sense, the extended family no longer existed in the 1980s-1990s. The family saga novel, almost unexceptionally with the extended family as the narrative setting, was no longer a realistic tool to faithfully portray what was going on in society; instead, it was more like the Foucauldian historico-political discourse, whose power was not in a realistic portrayal but parody, irony and the metaphorical meanings in an age of dramatic transformations, in which "there was no longer a privileged realm of representation any more than there was a privileged referent" (Gallagher 432).

With the change of the social structure and the re-distribution of wealth and social status, new problems emerged. According to the study made by Ole Bruun in 1992, "families pursued a 'dual flow' strategy in which some members continued to tap the prestige and security of the state sector while others pursued the material wealth of private enterprise" (Bruun 139). Women seemed to have been a national concern since the establishment of the Republic of China. The Republican *Marriage Law*, the 1950 *Marriage Law* and the 1980 *Marriage Law* all took women's liberation as the impetus to national salvation or construction. However, according to the 1982 population census, 95 percent of the heads in government agencies and 85 percent of the heads in the Party's and people's organizations were male, and 74 percent of the leaders in the rural communes and urban street offices were men; furthermore, based on the information provided by the National Statistical Bureau in 1983, 44 percent of the labor force was female in 1982, but only 38 percent of professionals and technicians were female, and only 10 percent of cadres were female. Aging became increasingly a social

problem to solve. In 2002, the number of people over 60 in age was over 120 million - accounting for nearly 10% of the population - and was growing at an annual rate of 3.2% (Pochagina 85). The percentage of the population over 60 in age was expected to reach 20% by 2030 (86), but the "collapse of the urban public goods regime", especially that of the old pension system, which had relied on state-owned enterprises, meant that many elderly people fell through the cracks during the social security reform (Solinger 127). Based on Zhang Qian Forrest's estimate, only 17% of the population older than 60 (mostly in cities) had access to pensions and two thirds of them were financially supported and looked after by their families (qtd. in Zhang, "Economic" 1232).

The problems mentioned above were just part of the problems faced by the Chinese people in the 1980s-1990s, but none of these problems was reflected in this group of saga novels, which seemed to try to avoid talking about contemporary issues. This seems to be a strategy used by the writers to achieve self-protection and could also be taken as the degeneration of literature. This phenomenon was once mentioned by Perry Link in his *Uses of Literature*. He discussed that writers took a roundabout route to avoid politically sensitive topics by writing "travelogues, sketches of unusual people, or stories of peculiar coincidence" (Link, "*Uses*" 34).

The family saga novels in the 1980s-1990s were mostly based on historical archives, local chronicles, biographies, legends and imaginations. The extended family was still the narrative setting but the time span was mostly stopped just before the start of Deng Xiaoping's reform. In these nine sample novels, only Mo

Yan's *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and Zhang Wei's *The Ancient Ship* covered a tiny part of the reform in the early 1980s. On the continuum from the conservative extremists to the iconoclastic extremists were different groups of writers varying in style, theme and language expertise. They were well educated and familiar with all modern paradigms to keep themselves in close touch with the latest literary tendencies and international communications. On the one hand, they were still frustrated and felt obligated by a sublimated professionalism associated with authorship, but on the other hand they knew well the cost and sacrifice of touching the off-limits, which had been demonstrated by Wei Jingsheng, Chen Ziming and Wang Juntao. Chen was sentenced to 13 years in prison, where he wrote a defense worth considering. It says, "the two [referring to government and intellectuals] must develop independently and recognize the common areas in their goals; each should shoulder particular responsibilities and accord the other respect in the way of contending, not clashing, cooperating but remaining independent of each other" (Chen, "Chen Ziming's" 382). Confronting such a sincere and accommodating attitude and the fact that the person *with* such a sincere and accommodating attitude was sentenced to jail for 13 years, any language or realist description might appear too pale and superficial.

3.4 The Family Saga Novels as a Literary Genre in the 1980s-1990s

When discussing the reciprocal relationship between trauma theory and postmodernism, James Berger suggested that the former helped to explain the postmodern emphasis on "decentering, fragmentation, the sublime and

apocalyptic" (Berger 573). The commonality among the family saga novels published in the 1980s-1990s can be generally summarized as a trauma-like anxiety caused by uncertainty and dislocation. If the 1980s was still influenced by the spirit of "root seeking", the 1990s saw the fragmented signified without the signifiers any more. Borders disappeared due to the void of distinction between the sacred and the vulgar, the experienced and the imagined, the rational and the insane, and the temporal and the spatial. History was no longer a chronological framework of hard facts but "my" fragmented interpretations of history and society. Time was no longer a pre-given construct but a temporarily moveable anchor, based on which "I" could move back into the lost enigma but also forward into the unknown future, depending on the need of "my" narratology. The readers' function was more activated and relied on in the production of meanings - due to the fragmentations, implications, raptures, discontinuities or emptiness, purposefully or defectively left by the authors in the literary works, whose symbolic or allegorical meanings seemed to have surpassed the traditional norm of realistic descriptions or interpretations.

Wang Jing noticed that, in the immediate wake of the defeat of ultra-leftism in the early post-Mao era, what stood "in need of rehabilitation is not simply the so-called individual victims of the Revolution, but Marx himself: the historical past of Marx, the philosopher, whose outcry against alienation" (Wang, "*High*" 141). Writers with this inclination took reflective and critical attitudes towards the unstable eco-political situation and shifting values in the 1980s-1990s and tried to re-establish a powerful image of China through going back to tradition against an

international background of post-colonialism and anti-traditionalism. They argued that "the economic miracle of the four 'little dragons' in East Asia was created because they all shared Confucian collectivism, family loyalty and frugality as well as patriarchal power structure" (Zhao, "Chinese" 732). The family saga novels written under the guidance of such instinct emphasized "not violent class struggle but harmonious Confucian social order and discipline...not proletarian internationalism but ardent Chinese patriotism" (Baum 155). Among many, Zhang Wei's *The Ancient Ship* and Cheng Zhongshi's *White-Deer Plain* are quite representative. Baopu in *The Ancient Ship* was the symbol of the Confucian ethics of "*qiong ze dushan qi shen, da ze jianji tianxia*" 穷则独善其身，达则兼济天下 (when in poverty, one should practice self-cultivation and keep integrity; when in success, one should try to let others be benefited). When he felt he had no ability to bring benefit to all the townspeople he stayed in his grinding mill and repeatedly read Qu Yuan's *Heavenly Questions* and Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*; however, when his cowardliness and withdrawal from the external struggles, which was also the feature of Confucius' Doctrine of the Mean, led to more tragedies among the people around him, he stepped out of that old grinding mill and took the position of manager of the Wali Bean Noodle Factory, which had been modernized by Li Zhichang's technique, and began his calculations of how to make more profit for the townspeople.

In order to learn lessons from history, Paopu kept asking himself the questions once asked by Qu Yuan in ancient times and hoped to find the answers in Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*. This search for answers seemed to

have lasted for centuries, but it is still in process. As the end of this story indicated that although Sui Paopu had walked out of the grinding mill which symbolized the backwardness and burden of history and led the townspeople to a better future, old conventions still existed, thus endowing the novel with a relevance to the problems faced by modern China: corrupt local officials, land reform and the rights of peasants, the tension between the poor and rich, the fight among factions, and the problems of political cycles. It reminded people not to forget their traumatic history and at the same time to recover from the trauma and prevent such trauma from occurring again. Upon this, Lee raised a very sharp and new historicist question: "By revisiting these pivotal events again and again, one question that *The Ancient Ship* poses obliquely is this: is it ever possible to author a truthful history, especially against the production of official histories by those in power" (Lee para. 5)?

The younger generation in this group of novels were confronted with many opportunities and temptations; the conflicts were no longer between the old conservative generation and the new progressive one, as frequently discussed in the novels of the Republican period and Mao's era; instead, they were more within the protagonists' internal world: between conscience and desire or between the split personalities of individualism and nationalism. This intent was mainly achieved through the composition of the family structure: there were usually more than two sons plus daughters in every family, who differentiated in personalities, value systems, and the means they adopted to realize their aims.

In Chen Zhongshi's *White-Dear Plain*, both Mr. Zhu and Jiaxuan were the

symbols of Confucianism, whose content was specified by what was going on in the Ancestral Temple and the provisions listed on the County Act, drafted by Mr. Zhu and supervised by Jiaxian in its application; this kind of administrative pattern might be recommendable but depending on how and when.

The portrait of Bai Xiaowen deserves attention: he seems to be the product of series of political movements and totalitarian regimes, who can always be the guest of honor at the table of the dominant party through his adaptability or betrayal of conscience, loyalty and friends in order to win the favor of the uprising dominant party. At the same time, Bai Jiaxuan, the patriarch of the family clan who repeatedly emphasized the importance of filial piety, loyalty, benevolence and righteousness to the young generation was actually more awed than respected or beloved. He knew all the principles of how to be a good person and advocated them to the public and clan members, but when it came to the life-and-death moments for the survival or prosperity of his own family clan, he demonstrated the most selfish, pragmatic, and cold-blooded aspects, reminding people of a dictator or hypocrite.

The episode in which Bai Xiaowu was determined to write the family tree in *White-Deer Plain* was propagandistic: in an age of shifting values, the young people should stick to their clan constructions which were the source of their identity and wealth. Through the return of the younger generations to their ancestors' temple to worship, after having experienced ups and downs, another pedagogic purpose was achieved, whose implied meaning might be illuminated by the following statement: "the unique combination of traits, experiences, and

potentials that makes up a person may never be accepted or appreciated by others, but 'family' is where such acceptance tends to occur, if anywhere" (Beutler et al 809). With a quotation mark, this "family" might mean "nation" or anything than its surface meaning promises.

The harmony created by the village's self-governing system might be an irony to the tension China was experiencing in the age of reforms: the vulnerability of the central control over the local governments. The rapid development in the market economy had intensified the local autonomy which directly challenged the old vertical administrative system with the central government at the top and made urgent the horizontal cooperation between different enterprises, levered by the principle of mutual benefits and market prices.

Contrary to the conservative or Confucianistic inclinations discussed above was the so-called avant-garde or iconoclastic mood of writing, which was recognized as daring in form and destructive in ideology to traditionally sublimated norms and values. With shrewd insight on politics, human nature, and the dark side of society, this group of writers distinguished themselves with parody, brutal scenes, fierce languages and multi-trajectory positions to achieve an "attempt to undermine an entrenched ideological and historical perspective, so as to bring about a regenerated social order and a whole new mode of social vision" (Loewenstein 52). Su Tong with his *Rice*, Ge Fei with his *Enemy* and Yu Hua with his *Cries in the Drizzle* were representatives of this trend. Different from traditionally established authorities who were held in high esteem and played the role of moral guides, the fathers in this group of family saga novels were evil; in

their destructive yet energetic way, they created a kingdom of devils, whose daily practices were murders, intimidations, smugglings of drugs and weapons, and cursing. Evil seemed to have taken hold of human beings and degeneration was leading human beings to self-destruction. Therefore, death, in all these three novels, started from the youngest member in the families. Hatred and bodily hurt were frequently exchanged between father and son: in Su Tong's *Rice*, Five Dragons broke his elder son's legs, but his golden teeth were all knocked out by his younger son upon his death; in Ge Fei's *Enemy*, there was always a hostility and suspicion between the father and the sons, and in the end the father killed the last son in the family; and in Yu Hua's *Cries in the Drizzle*, "I", the second son in the family, was hated by the father and often beaten by him, and in the end fights broke out between the father and the eldest son which ended in the loss of one of the father's ears cut off by the eldest son. In this group of novels, evil itself seems to have become the purpose and the end of people's living. As indicated by *Enemy*, the last possible heir of the Zhao family was murdered by the father himself, just in order to fulfill an evil prediction, or to avoid to be killed by the son. In light of this, the family was destined to extinguish.

In order to intensify the concept of degeneration beyond redemption, decay and barrenness permeated these novels: black beetles, spiders, and rats were everywhere in Proprietor Feng's Great Swan Rice Emporium and Zhao Shaozhong's once prosperous complex house. The maidenhair tree at the door of Zhao Shaozhong's complex house could only be interpreted in an allegorical way: it had a history of two to three hundred years and looked still very prosperous;

however, its roots were already rotten, as predicted by the blind monk, and it was destined to die. Zhao Shaozhong cut the tree down and, to confirm his suspicion and scarcity, a group of huge rats ran out of the tree's hollow trunk and there were already some dead ones there. This allegory was startling yet enlightening; it seemed to have formed a parallel metaphor to what Wang Jing once said, "In the mid-1980s, Liu Suola's generation was acutely aware that the ground underneath their feet had caved in completely. Neither the aborted socialist utopia nor imported spiritual convictions could deliver them from an abyss that was nonetheless fascinating in the depth of its hollowness" (Wang, "*High*"138).

Women in this group of family saga novels were thrown to the lowest level of the hell - if the family had been turned into a hell by the husband and sons. When Five Dragons madly crammed rice into Cloud Weave's and Cloud Silk's vaginas and forced the prostitute Little Beauty to eat up all those sticky rice dug out of their vaginas, women's dignity and basic rights of personhood were completely destroyed in the metamorphosis of a masculine tyrant and the savageness of a merciless society.

Women in this group of novels were conceptually taken as sexual tools and objects to enslave. This point was illuminated by what Five Dragons said to his second son: "women are all sluts…fucked often enough, she'll start listening to you" (Su, "*Rice*" 170). Therefore, no matter how desperately Cloud Weave and Cloud Silk cursed him and refused him, he could always "satisfy his deepest urges" and cram "a handful of raw rice up their vaginas" (130). In *Enemy*, Zhao Shaozhong was plainly told that the suitor of his elder daughter, Meimei, was a

rascal, and to marry Meimei to him meant to ruin her life, but he still married her to that pockmarked guy. As a result, Meimei was turned into a sexual tool for that pockmarked guy and his brothers. Zhao Shaozhong's second daughter, Liuliu, had been living in the fear of being spied and sexually harassed; although she made every effort to stay clean and naïve, she was raped and died, with her clothes thrown aside in a reed marsh. In *Cries in the Drizzle*, the weak and innocent woman was insulted and thrown into the ditch by her husband's sexual partner while her husband and eldest son stood by and watched.

If the iconoclastic attitude was more associated with rebellion and destruction to the established norms in this mortal world, the nihilistic instinct, in a transcendental or detached manner, had demonstrated its strength through a mild resistance against getting involved in this mortal world. With the concepts of unpredictable force and inexorable doom, Alai's *Red Poppies* and Su Tong's *My Life as Emperor* declared the end of an imperial age. Despite their temporary prosperities and extreme powers, these empires unexceptionally fell – as dust would settle - sooner or later. This "pre-destined" or "inexorable doom" was exactly embodied in the Chinese title of *Red Poppies*, "*Chenai Luoding*" 尘埃落定, which literally means "dust settles"; it was also the subtitle of the last chapter of the novel - when all love and hatred, loyalty and betray, murder and revenge, and prosperity and decline became past/history. There is no need here to comment on Howard Goldblatt and Sylvia Li-chun Lin's stranslation; however, their translation from *Dust Settles* [Chen'ai luoding 尘埃落定] to *Red Poppies* [Hong yingsu 红罂粟] did change the cultural and philosophical implications. The

Chinese title seemed to have more implications with Taoism, Friedrich Nietzsche's "nothingness", the Buddhist metempsychosis, or historical nihilism, which had been somewhat discussed by Alai through his protagonist's private historicist Wangpo Yeshi, "before the chieftains, there had been local lords here, but they had disappeared with the arrival of the chieftains. Who would come after the chieftains? I couldn't see that; what I did see was the chieftains' estates crumbling to dust, leaving nothing behind after the dust settled. Yes, nothing was left" (Alai, "*Red*" 373-74).

In an unmistakable manner to describ something remote in the past that might have never happened, both of these novels told stories of a noble youth: one was the younger son of a Tibetan chieftain and the other was a prince who was pushed to the crown through conspiracy; although both of them were in the treacherous current of political struggle, they kept a naive heart or free will. The former enjoyed being an "idiot" while the latter wished to be a tightrope walker high in the sky as free as a bird. The father in both novels was on the edge of death and his empire was destined to be the last one. If everything had been pre-destined and catastrophe was unavoidable, all the struggles and conspiracies of human beings for power and longevity seemed stupid and mocking.

In both novels, an heir was sought to vitalize the empire, which was doomed to collapse. The message of doom was transmitted through semi-human, semi-divine characters. Omens were given at the very beginning of both novels. In Alai's *Red Poppies*, it was Living Buddha Jeeka, who declared that "a calamity is about to occur" (Alai "*Red*" 67), while in Su Ting's *My Life as Emperor*, it was

Sun Xin, a mad alchemist and attendant of the deceased Xie Emperor. In a detached yet lighthearted way, both novels ended in "nothingness".

Symbolism was achieved in Alai's *Red Poppies* through colors: red and white. Poppy flowers were red, but the poppy sap was white; both of them were "demonic temptations" (96) and were actually the same thing, demonstrating different existing states/textures at different life stages. This "hermaphroditic" phenomenon was skillfully used by Alai to interpret the relationship between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party. The success of this analogy lies in the association of red with the flag of the Communist Party and white with the flag of the Nationalist Party. Alai argues:

> The uncolored Han came here merely for money, like the businessmen, or for survival, like the adviser himself [Huang]. But the colored Han were different – they wanted to dye our land with their own colors. That was what the White Han Chinese wanted. And if the Red Han won the civil war, I heard that they wanted even more to stain every piece of land in that color they revered. (391)

Besides these political implications mentioned above, white in Chinese culture also means "nothingness", which was the motif of this novel. For example, when "I", the idiot, looked into Wangpo Yeshi's eyes, trying to find the answer to "who would favor the Tibetan territory – the white or the red" (Alai, "*Red*" 379), what "I" could find was only "the white"; "White Dream" was the subtitle of a

chapter in this novel, describing how the white sap from the stalk of poppies stimulated people's greed, lust and ambition; and in the end, before the idiot younger Master lost consciousness after being stabbed by an avenger, he made the following statements [the underline was added by me]:

> when the sunlight flickers, the sound will disperse. <u>There will be nothing except a white light</u> [...] The blood drips to the floor, forming a pool. As I grow cold on the bed, my blood is slowly turning into the color of a dark night. (433)

Lisa Rado argued, "Studying modernist primitivism will ultimately help identify the cultural anxieties fueling both these emancipatory and repressive strains within modern culture" (Rado 298). In Mo Yan's *Big Breasts & Wide Hips,* the emancipation of the repressed primitive desire was praised as highly as the force of turning sterility into fertility and hatred into love. If *Red Sorghum* and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* could be considered as twins, a transition from men's dominance in sexuality in *Red Sorghum* to women's dominance in sexuality in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* seemed to have occurred, though in both novels women were invariably portrayed as heroines, either in dealing with the exterior tough world or in consulting their interior need for love, motherhood, and sexuality. This transition seems to have demonstrated how Foucaultian feminism had been gradually merged into New Historicism to form a so-called "new women's history" (Newton 100) or "feminist new historicism" (Lennox 159), according to

which, women could participate in the culture and history shaped by men, while maintaining a culture of their own, "just as women may have shared male versions of 'history' and social relations while operating inside of their own oppositional representations of the world" (Kelly-Godal 43-49).

The vulgarity associated with masculinity, portrayed in *Red Sorghum* and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* was in sharp contrast with the traditionally idealized masculine image: the refined and cultivated intellectual man, who had dominated Chinese masculine culture for centuries. *Red Sorghum* opened a masculine wildness through rapes, murders, and robberies in the wild and thriving red sorghum fields. Its primitive force was even more daringly expressed in Sima Ku's shameless manifesto that he was the "savior" to all women who suffered from "feverish lust" (Mo, "*Big*" 228). Wine, the symbol of energy and primitive desire, became the daily drink of this group of "heroic and bastard" men and women, which resonated to the lyric in their chant that "If you drink our wine, you won't kowtow to the emperor" (Mo, "*Red*" 9).

Although it was basically men who were dominant in *Red Sorghum* while it was women in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, the characterization of Mother in both novels was similar. They were both determined to defy traditional moral values and control their own fates. "My Grandma" in *Red Sorghum* was married to a leprous winery owner but slept with a sedan carrier on the way; "Mother" in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* was married into a traditional peasant family, but in order to avoid the shame that she might not be able to bear any child, she slept with six different men and had nine children, none by her own husband. Instead of being

held in scorn or contempt, these two women were highly praised as "jinguoyingxiong" 巾帼英雄 (heroine). According to David Der-wei Wang and Michael Berry, through "Shangguan Jintong's Oedipal love for his mother, his breast fetish, and his decadent impotence" (Wang and Berry 493), the seriousness of historiography had totally been subverted in Mo Yan's world. In an approach that was mostly associated with postmodernism or magic realism, Mo Yan might have transmitted the following information that China, which had long been controlled by a patriarchal culture and once enjoyed the glory of an empire, had lost its power to reproduce; it had been paralyzed due to the loss of masculinity and the energy of reproduction; women, no matter how fertile, energetic and strong-willed, would be failed in the end, due to the degeneration or impotence of men, so that "bastards" or "hybridities" were inevitable. In this vulgar but enlightening manner, Mo Yan seemed to have completed the subversion of historiography from its previous sublimated position to the most secular one – the body. History had been reduced to the level of being written in body or by body (Wang and Berry).

Both novels were suffused "with depictions of epic magnanimity, erotic desire, bloody violence and chaos, and fantastical suspense" (Ng para. 9), demonstrating a good blending of history and romance, realism and supernaturalism, and indigenous aesthetics and foreign philosophies. In both *Red Sorghum* and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips,* the traditional concept of polarity was blurred: the hero was de-sanctified and everyone might accidentally be a hero. History was no longer composed of given facts. Instead, it was the stream of the

author's consciousness, based on fragmented historical knowledge and personal imagination. Time was no longer a pre-given construct. For example, when the narrator told how Mother cut two holes in her top, so that she could free her breasts anytime when Jintong was hungry, an outside voice sounded that "her inventiveness started a tradition; flapped lined jackets are still worn in Dalan to this day" (Mo, "*Big*" 107). These "two holes" also reminded the reader of the Unicorn Bra Company in later chapters, so that intertextuality is achieved.

Jean-François Lyotard explains that modernity, "in whatever age it appears, cannot exist without a shattering of belief and without discovery of the 'lack of reality' of reality, together with the invention of other realities" (Lyotard 79). With his "tradition usurping modernity" and primitive life instinct over civilized rationality (Wang, "High" 157), Mao Yan opened a space that paradoxically transcended both the traditionalism and hybrid modernism, revealing the potential for a dialectical discourse; through his "switching back and forth in an impressionistic and free-associative style between subjective interiority and exterior events" (Ng para. 9), Mo Yan had opened a historical space, which resisted both traditional orthodox and the invasion of pluralistic Western logics, helping identify a cultural anxiety fueling "both the emancipator and repressive strains within modern culture" (Rado 298).

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

As far as the study of the family is concerned, scholars in sociology are often frustrated by the "missing information" in the "code-like sequence" (Hart 104) or numerical data, which are usually the final language or narratives of their studies. At the same time, literature is often regarded as having "a generously encompassing ability to 'grasp together' and integrate into one whole and complete story' the 'composite representations' of historical experience" (Ricœur 173). Inspired by Robert Morrison MacIver's cultural theory, Karl Marx's and Max Weber's stratification theories, and the new historicist assumptions, this research tries to answer the following questions: how is the family portrayed in the family saga novels published in Mainland China during the twentieth century? Is its textualization the result of the negotiation between the author's autonomy and the external coercive forces? Can the family saga novels, with their process-focused "thick descriptions," be taken as a reliable and indispensible information source to fill up the gaps left by the "code-like sequence" or numerical data in sociology? What might be the link between literature and sociology as far as the study of the family was concerned?

In a manner that tries to cross the boundary traditionally set up between literary studies and sociological studies, this research has examined most of the representative family saga novels published in Mainland China during the twentieth century. The organization of this research and the description of it are

guided by these two considerations: how the Chinese family saga novel, as a literary genre, has thematically and stylistically changed during the twentieth century as the result of the changes in social forms and literary aesthetics, and whether literary texts can be taken as an indispensible information source to fill up the gaps left by the "code-like sequence" or numerical data in sociology. Analysis has been thematically as well as stylistically done to the sample novels, which has been one of the generic features of literary studies, but discussions are made in light of statistics, documents and other sociological data with the intention to find out to what extend the information provided by the saga novels on the behavior of families and the corresponding society corresponds to the statistical data circulating in the field of sociology. The result of this research is summarized as follows.

4.1 The Chinese Family Saga Novel as a Literary Genre in the Twentieth Century

4.1.1 The Republican Period

Many epoch-making events happened during the period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the first time in its history, China had to face its backwardness and the humiliation of foreign occupations. After China's door was forced open by modern weapons, all European thoughts, ancient or modern, flooded in simultaneously, and the Chinese elites, from the imperial court members to the ordinary intellectuals, found themselves caught in different ideologies, described by Liang Qichao as:

> Idealism and materialism have both gone to the extreme…Socialism, which is so fashionable, amounts to no more than fighting for bread…now pragmatism and evolutionism are being promoted, the aim being to embrace the ideal in the practical and to harmonize mind and matter. In my opinion, this is precisely the line of development in our ancient systems of thought. Although the schools of the sages – Confucius, Laozi, and Mozi – are different, their common goal is to unify the ideal and the practical. (Liang, "Travel" 378).

Although different ideologies and literary trends co-existed due to the lack of a dominant political power or a coercive ideological/ethical standard, a shared belief in a better China and an unshakable patriotism characterized almost all the family saga novels in the Republican period - "enlightenment pitted against national salvation" was the summary given by Kirk A. Denton (11); discourses, as observed by Peter Zarrow, "that did not seem to contribute to building a strong nation-state were eventually marginalized" (11).

In Chinese history, realism could be regarded as formally formulated by Bai Juyi in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.). He proposed that "*wenzhang he weishi er zhu, geshi he weishi er zuo*" 文章合为时而著，歌诗合为事而作 (Essays should be written to reflect contemporary issues, and poems are inspired by real events) (qtd. in Yan, "Two" 32). Since then, realism had been taken as the canonic standard for both literary creation and criticism, highly appreciated by orthodox schools. This realistic intention was further emphasized in the early twentieth

century, when national crisis justified the uncovery of social problems and the call for a realistic attitude towards life; the Marxist theory of historical materialism also oriented most of the leading writers to attach importance to the factual analysis of history and society (Denton "*Problematic*"; Liu "*Translinguial*"; Liu "Maoist"). The social function of literature was emphasized, and symbolism, by assuming the characters in the novel to stand for certain "types" of people in real life, was adopted in many novels to intensify the aesthetic effects. Ba Jin's confession about how he wrote *Family* is quite insightful:

> all the characters in *Family* were once loved or hated by me. I witnessed or experienced many of the scenes described in it...however, I was not writing my own family. I wrote the history of all official and landlord families. (Ba, "Talk" 206)

Except for Lu Ling's *The Moneybag's Sons and Daughters*, the family in the family saga novels of the Republican period could be taken as an extended patriarchal structure, dominated by the male over the female and the elder male over the younger male. The decisive power of this structure was the integration of the ownership of property and the traditional codes of Confucian ethics.

The father or the eldest male who owned the property for the use of the household was the authority of the family: he made the decisions for all the family members, including the younger generation's education and choice of spouse, and he was the legally or publicly recognized representative of the household. The

image and personality of this father might be different, but the core part underlining the family authority pattern was the same: the private economy, the legalized cooperative system between the family and the state, and a set of feudal ideologies, rationalizing the hierarchical social order and the father's patriarchal position.

Sons were expected to listen, to be selected as the officials through reading Confucian classics and passing the civil service recruitment examination, and to develop the family clan. However, living in an age of political turbulence, national crisis, and ideological transformations, not every son behaved in strict accordance with the feudal codes or family expectations, especially after the official recruitment examination system was abolished in 1905 and the Western-styled schooling, which emphasized science and technology, was ushered in. Conflicts arose between the old and the young generations, and even within the young generation itself. This situation was allegorized through the literary paradigm that in the big feudal family there were usually three sons: the youngest son must be the most radical, romantic and revolutionary, because he represented progress, novelty and freedom; the eldest son must be the most trammeled, because, as the expected heir of the feudal family, he must be responsible for the whole family and behave properly—he stood for the victim of feudalism, with internalized Confucian norms and ethics; the second son was usually portrayed as being subject to changes and opportunities; they usually had no obvious objectives in life, tending to be selfish and backboneless.

Women were either portrayed as the victims of the feudal economic, political,

and ideological systems, like Mei, Mingfeng and Ruiyu in *Family*, or they were blamed for taking part in social activities and behaving notoriously, like Jin Suheng in *The Moneybag's Sons and Daughters* or Guan Gaodi in *The Yellow Storm*, "whose body had been internationalized" (Lao, "*Yellow*" 961).

Taking all the family saga novels in the early twentieth century into consideration, the following thematic pattern was observed: the decline of the feudal system was inevitable and the salvation of the nation concerned every person; stylistically, an omniscient narrator was the feature of all the family saga novels and realism was the main instinct. Although traditional conventions and modes were consciously discarded by most of the writers in the early twentieth century - in order to meet the revolutionary need or to favor a mass market, readers could still find detailed descriptions of scenery, the layout of big houses and yards, the correspondence of the inner feeling with outer physical changes, and the polarization in the configuration of protagonists and plots, which were normally the characteristics of traditional paradigms in the history of Chinese literature.

4.1.2 Mao's Era

All the family saga novels in this group were written and published in the 1950s. When the GPCR began, literary creation was replaced by revolutionary model operas, big-letter posters and Little Red Books of Mao's quotes, which was the result of Jiang Qing's talk at the conference on "Literature and Art in the Armed Forces" held in 1967 and the support she obtained from the top officials in

the central government.

The literary works created after 1949 and before 1967 were commonly called "the literary works of the seventeen years". This is a historical period full of campaigns and movements, such as the Campaign to Resist America and Aid Korea (1951-1953), the Movement to Suppress Counter-revolutionaries (1950-1953), the Agricultural Co-operative Movement (1951-1956), the Three-anti Campaign (1951), the Five-anti Campaign (1952), the Anti-illiteracy Campaign (1950s), the Patriotic Hygiene Campaign (1952-1953), the Campaign of Socialist Reformation (1953-1956), the Rectification Movement (1955-1958), the Hundred Flowers Campaign (1957), the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957-1958), the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960), the Great Sparrow Campaign (1958-1962), the Campaign to Learn from Comrade Lei Feng (1953), and the Socialist Education Movement (1962-1966). Social harmony and ideological construction were identified as the guarantee to achieve the rapid and efficient construction of the newly-established socialist country, and class consciousness and selfless contribution became the cardinal virtues for every Communist member.

"Reinventing national history" is the phrase used by David Der-wei Wang to describe the literature of Mao's era (Wang, "Reinventing" 41). Based on the instructions given in Mao's "Talk at the Yan'an Forum", the New Democracy Revolution and the socialist construction were the only themes allowed to be written about; class struggle, Mao's correct leadership, and the contribution of the workers, peasants, and soldiers were the highlights to advocate; the construction of the positive images should be "tall", "big", and "perfect", and class struggles

should be embodied in the plot, dialogue and character configuration; the illiterate or scarcely educated masses were the audience, and, therefore, the literary language should be plain and straightforward; and in order to achieve this purpose, all revolutionary workers in the field of literature and art should go to the villages, factories, mines, and military bases to learn from the peasants, workers, and soldiers and to portray them. Mao's "Talk at the Yan'an Forum" was taken as the Bible by every worker in the field of literature and art; anyone who dared not to do as required in the *Talk* would be "misfits", and the fate of the misfits was exemplified by such writers as Hu Feng, Lu Ling, Lao She, and Li Liuru who were either put in jail or persecuted to death.

The extended family was no longer the model in this group of family saga novels. The collectivization of land and labor in economy, the elimination of exploiting classes in politics, and the smash of ancestral temples all led to the demise of the family economy and patriarchal norms. Class sympathy or comrade emotion had replaced affective ties among family members, and educations from the younger family members to the older ones became a fashion because they were members of the Communist Youth League; political stances or institutional similarities, rather than blood ties, became the standard for cooperation. The strict residence registration system had effectively prevented the immigration of labors.

In the family saga novels of Mao's era, the family authority pattern could roughly be demonstrated thus: the traditional role of the father had completely been replaced by the Communist Party, represented by Mao Zedong; all sons were successors to the Communist revolutions and the socialist construction; women

were elevated to the position of half the sky and treated in the labor force as the equal of men, and "Respecting the old and loving the young" was elevated to the position of the national policy to achieve social stability and familial harmony.

In Mao's era, the Soviet model was embodied in almost everything: planned economy, centralized politics, homogeneous ideology, and socialist realism in literature. To further facilitate his political purposes, Mao emphasized another standard for the literary workers to follow: revolutionary romanticism. Based on Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov's interpretation, "socialist realism…presupposes that revolutionary romanticism should enter into literary creation as a component part…and its struggle consists in a combination of the most stern and sober practical work with a supreme spirit of heroic deeds and magnificent future projects" (qtd. in Robin 61); therefore, it had a utopian function to lead readers "away from the antagonisms and oppressions of real life into a world of the impossible" (61); and it also meant that "not every truth is fit to tell because art must be given a militant and pedagogical dimension" (qtd. in Robin 62). Liang Bin's confession on how he wrote *Keep the Red Flag Flying* is quite revealing: "the novel is long and all about class struggles; therefore, ideologically, it is standardized; however, it might be tedious for the readers to read the same thing from the beginning to the end; so I added the plot of Yuntao falling in love with Chunlan and Jiangtao in love with Yanping" (Liang, "Talk" 727). A political slogan, "ren you duoda dan, di you duoda chan" 人有多大胆，地有多大产 (if you are bold enough, the field can produce as much as you want), might be the classic parody of Mao's socialist realism plus revolutionary romanticism.

Due to the fact that all literary works were written in strict accordiance with Mao's theories and aesthetics, the literary creation tended to be stereotyped in both theme and style. In Liu Zaifu's opinion, literature of Mao's era was reduced "from an aesthetic to a politico-ideological level, such as a writer's personal stand and worldview" – though, at the same time, he also emphasized the variety of the language adopted in the works of that historical period (Liu, "Farewell" 7). The author's autonomy and personal emotions were basically lost in the group will of class and the pragmatic applications of political ideologies. Hao Ran, who was considered probably as the only writer favored by Jiang Qing and Mao's literary critics during the GPCR, once confessed in a talk with Li Jiefei that "I know that the life of the peasants was hard. I was among them and suffered enough; I know their complaints because I also starved during those years. However, could I write all these into the book? No, it is definitely No" (qtd. in Li, "*Typical*" 347). This confession was made after Mao's regime was over and somewhat echoed his statements in the preface to his *The Golden Road* upon its publication, which was delayed for more than 10 years: "written in that special historical period, *The Golden Road* would inevitably be imprinted with things and emotions belonging to that age, including its defects and regrets. I did not change anything - just the way when it was finished. The purpose is obvious that I hope by reading this novel the reader could get a true picture of what that age was like (Hao, "Few" 3). Although it was a common practice that writers declared how faithfully they had observed life and reflected it in their works, details had obviously been trimmed in accordiance with Mao's literary aesthetics; although languages were mostly

authentic and lively, the characters who spoke the languages were created based on the revolutionary need or political purposes, and, therefore, the language had already been edited or pre-programmed to correspond with the construction of certain "types" of characters. In Wang Jing's words, "in Mao's era, the author's interior landscape is identical to the exterior occupied by Mao's theories and verified orthodox ideologies" (Wang, "High" 195).

4.1.3 The 1980s - 1990s

Most of the writers in the 1980s-1990s raised questions about human existence but refused to get involved in the contemporary life. It might be the result of the sharp pain caused by the memory of persecution and poverty belonging to Mao's era and a sense of dislocation or anxiety resulting from the transformation of the nation. The family saga novels in the 1980s-1990s were mostly inspired by history yet their concerns went beyond the general definition of history, so that the writing of the family saga novels itself seemed to have become a dynamic process of "negotiation and dialogue with history, memory, and the cultural past whereby a new subject may emerge" (Chen, "Writing" 35). This process not only got involved the power of language but also the political aesthetics and the author's conscience. As the economic and political systems became more flexible and multi-faceted, the way of people's existence diversified and so did the moral standards and literary paradigms.

The transformation of China from a politicized society born out of wars, movements and struggles that had lasted for more than a century to an economy-

/market-oriented society was not only a challenge for the national leaders to find a new base of legitimacy to sustain their role of authority, but also a new matrix for the intellectuals to locate themselves in order to achieve reputations or to avoid traps. This toughness was further intensified by the cleavages among the intellectuals themselves, who were surrounded by overseas influences, patron groups and the commercialized cultural market. More aware what they were pursuing, this group of writers seemed to know all those small tactics about the suspensions of the plot or sensual depictions that were capable of discharging the external and internal repressions from the readers, leaving them momentarily in a state of catharsis, or jerking the expected consequence off the pre-set trajectory, leaving the readers engaged in other kinds of imaginations. These writers might be labeled as avant-garde, root-seeking, new conservative, nihilistic, or primitivistic, but they never lost their alertness to the function of readership and the tyrannies of market and politics.

Different from the writers of the early twentieth century, who had actually experienced or lived through the activities portrayed in their works, the writers in the 1980s-1990s wrote their works mostly based on imaginations, anecdotes, local history, archives, segments of historical facts and biographies. In Anton Kaes' words, "These anecdotal everyday events function as signs that illuminate cultural motifs and behavioral codes and thus allow for a view into a society's self-understanding" (154). If the authors of the family saga novels in the Republican period and Mao's era were using their eyes and hearts to write, the writers in the 1980s-1990s were more relying on their techniques to write. The family, on most

occasions, had lost its material content and become a symbol for the writers to allegorize the national or political issues.

The politicization of literature in the Republican period and Mao's era was replaced in the 1980s-1990s by utilitarianism integrated with the writers' awe for political totalitarianism and a commercialized eclecticism, whose performance was facilitated by the metaphysical post-modernism, which postulated that the real world was "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality" (Baudrillard 1). Imaginations, verbal evasions, practical jokes, black humor and ironic self-referentiality became the frequently used tactics, and the protagonists were no longer portrayed in moral monochrome; instead, they were multi-faceted and changeable. Subjectivity, represented by "I", to synchronically play the role of the protagonist, the narrator, the commentator and the author, dominated most of the family saga novels to declare the coming of a new age characteristic of fictionalized politics or allegorized reality. This phenomenon could be summarized by Fredric Jameson's theory on third-world texts:

> third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic - necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society. (Jameson 69).

Almost all the novels had symbolic or allegorical meanings tied to the

development of the plot or the configuration of the protagonists, appropriated by the dominant political discourses and shaped by various forces from the commercialized book market, interest groups, and great international theorists such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Marie Émile Lacan, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Sigmund Freud and Ferdinand de Saussure. Readers were more taken as one part contributing to the production of meaning. The idea that "language speaks for itself" made all canonized narratives and literary criticism lose their priorities.

4.2 The Chinese Family Saga Novel in the Twentieth Century - A Literary Sociology

Walter Bryce Gallie discusses, "if it is true that in physical sciences there is always a theory, it is no less true that in historical research there is always a story" (Gallie 72). This "story" has been specified as the family saga novel in this research.

Early in 1991, Philip C.C. Huang purported that there existed "a paradigmatic crisis" in the field of Chinese social and economic studies, caused by the accumulation of "old constructs" and the "debates between them" which "no longer seemed relevant" and the lack of "something different" (Huang, "Paradigmatic" 299). This crisis was not only exclusive to the Chinese scholars in the field of social and economic studies. It was also a challenge to those who were engaged in the updating of their knowledge systems, especially in the age of globalization, which, as argued by Anthony Giddens, "should not be simply

conceptualized as…the technological ability of satellite communication to re-contextualize imagery and information across time and space… [but] the development of time-space distanciation that was not evident in pre-modern societies" (qtd. in Stevenson 49).

Traditionally, little effort has been done in the field of Chinese literary studies to correlate sociological facts with literary narratives. Many Western scholars have noticed the "historical accuracy" in the historical or family saga novels written by such famous writers as Sir Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, William Faulkner and Honoré de Balzac. After expounding the reasons why many historians had taken William Faulkner's family saga novels as a credible authority on the South, Don H. Doyle argued that Faulkner had used "the historical fiction to inform the history – to sublimate the apocryphal into the actual" (Doyle 5). Similar evaluations were made by Theodore B. Atkinson III in his following discoveries that "the aesthetic components of [Faulkner's] texts are bound to larger ideological formations" (4), and in a conclusive manner, Kevin Railey declared that Faulkner's family saga novels of the southern farmers in the United States helped affect "a decisive historical process in the formation of modern America" (xiv).

On a separate page before the preface to Cheng Zhongshi's *White-Deer Plain* is a quote from Balzac: "Novels are secret histories of a nation". By doing this, Cheng Zhongshi intended to demonstrate that what he was doing was to uncover the truth that might have been neglected by historians or the "living scenes", sought by the sociological researchers who hoped to "reconstruct the experience"

of the past. Similar ideas were expressed by Li Rui in his family saga novel *Old Address*. He exclaimed that even for a family as distinguished as the Li family who had been engaged in the salt business in Silver City for centuries, its familial activities, due to their irretrievability in the politicized history, might "never find [their] way[s] into *A History of China's Salt Industry* or any historical books" (Li, "*Old*" 207).

The evaluation for the textualization of the family in literary texts might have experienced a process from evolution to interaction. The first was connected with an ideology that certain family behaviors were conducive to the development of society as a whole. This logic was mostly associated with the theory of modernization. With regard to the Chinese family saga novels, it was demonstrated as how the feudal family was destined to decline because it represented the feudal backwardness and decadency which were the obstacles to the social progress represented by democracy and science; therefore, the collapse of the extended feudal family with the death of its feudal Master was the formula adopted in almost all the family saga novels in the Republican period. During Mao's era, this evolution theory was interpreted as Mao's belief that a socialist country was a harmonious family and Communism would sooner or later be realized, and, therefore, "the future was promised but the process was meandrous" (Mao, "Chairman" 211). The marketization of the Chinese economy in the 1980s-1990s, especially the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, fundamentally destroyed the base of evolution theory in the textualization of the family in literary texts; an interactive mode became popular in the age of post-

modernization. The family was not only the product of certain social form but also a contributor to the formation of that social form, which was also no longer predestined to follow an assumed pattern. The social form as well as the family form was, thus, taken more as the result of unpredictable coincidences or the result of the negotiation of different forces. An interactive correspondence between the family form and particular economic arrangements was widely recognized by scholars both in sociology and literature, and the interaction between the material aspects of making a living and the cultural value attached to the family was emphasized.

As suggested by Sylvia Yanagisako in her 1979 study, researchers had increasingly given up the search for a uniform definition of the family or the household in favor of "contingent characterizations in different cultural contexts" (Yanagisako 167). This theory was further supported by the fact that some sociological data were based on anecdotal analysis, and the guarantee of the quality of particular statistical series sometimes would depend on the circumstances in which they were constructed. Gregory C. Chow once commented that when he cited the statistics provided by the *Statistical Yearbook of China,* he could not "provide quantitative measurements of the errors in particular statistical series and would confine himself to inferences from such characteristics as sources of data and quality of personnel" (Chow, "Chinese" 193). Similar comments were made by David S. G. Goodman in his studies of Chinese politics. He pointed out that:

> The CCP's rejection of the politics of the Cultural Revolution and its reassessment of that period has triggered a reappraisal of earlier research, its findings and judgments, in the West…Until the late 1970s almost every book published on China's politics accepted without question that there was a relative, and increasing, equality of income in the PRC particularly amongst the peasantry, even if it were an equality of poverty. However, more recent research has detailed the extent to which inequalities persisted and even increased during the era of Mao-dominated politics. (426).

He then cited the research done by Edward Friedman in 1981 as the example to support his ideas. The above examples and remarks show that wrong or fake statistics might exist due to the lack of technical personnel or instruments, malpractice in sampling and data analysis, or the intentional falsification of information. The following was another example to show that contradictions existed between what Song Qingling reported in *Peking Review* on 11 February 1972 and what had been written in the national policy. In Song's report it was revealed that "today in our country there are people's communes in rural places where women receive less pay than men for equal work in production" (6), which was completely in contrast with Mao's directions that "in production men and women must receive equal pay for equal work. Genuine equality between the sexes can only be realized in the process of the socialist transformation" (Mao, "Note to 'Women'" 263). In the same report, Song also mentioned that "When girls are to be married, their parents often ask for a certain amount of money or

various articles from the family of the would-be husband" (6-7). This was also in conflict with the *Marriage Law* published in 1950 and what had been described in most of the novels written in Mao's era. In this situation, the reciprocal relationship between the author and the national-legal institution was exposed, and Mao Zedong and his workers in the fields of literature and art were both turned into the history makers of a romanticized Communist history. The family saga novels were put in question or challenge if the expected goal was to find historical truth in them.

On the other hand, this group of family saga novels did provide "living scenes" or "processual data". For example, in the explanation of why the extended family gradually disappeared, more reasons could be found and added to the ones mentioned before in this dissertation or standing in the sociological works through the information provided in the narrative plots of *Sanliwan*, *The Builder* and *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*: the national productivity had been greatly improved due to Mao's restriction on people's devotion to the construction of their own families; furthermore, the publication of the *Marriage Law* seemed more like a pragmatic measure to evacuate the density of population through women's leaving their parents' home to compose their own conjugal families, rather than to give women more equality or higher social status. Another example was the description of the great famine right after the disastrous Great Leap Forward movement. Based on the sociological or demographic statistics, the rate of the natural population growth was 16% in 1949 but in 1953 it dramatically went up to 23% - a net increase of 60 million in population in 4 years, so that

family planning became one important provision in the national policy written in the "Outline of Agricultural Development" [nongye fazhan gangyao 农业发展纲要] published in 1953; however, during the three famine years following the Great Leap Forward, the birth rate decreased dramatically, while the death rate increased. Based on the census made in 1964, in 1960 the negative population growth occurred: the birth rate was 20.86%, while the death rate was 25.43%. Numbers gave people an impression that it was a fact, but the shaping process of this fact needed descriptive information, which was exactly reflected in Zhang Wei's *The Ancient Ship* and Mo Yan's *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*: people ate grasses, tree barks, and clay; on the other hand, the dramatic increase in population between 1949 and 1953 resulted from an overall improvement of people's living standard, because over 80% of the previously exploited peasants were supplied with enough food and shelters and the socialist hospitals were set up to gurantee a wealthier living environment and the extension of life-span and healthier birth deliveries. That was the life and experience standing behind statistics.

The portrayal of women is a fascinating and dynamic phenomenon in almost all the family saga novels studied in this research: there seems to be a consistent disparity between how women should be treated as advocated by the social activists/elites during the twentieth century and what women were actually treated as described in the family saga novels, which were usually taken as the reflection of society.

Modern education for women in China was initiated by Western missionaries

out of their religious desire to develop Western religions among Chinese women and also out of a holy spirit to do justice to the physically, psychologically and spiritually enslaved Chinese women who had been deprived of basic human rights for thousands of years. In 1844 the first school for girls in Chinese history, the Ningbo Girls School, was founded in Ningbo by Mary Ann Aldersey, one of the first missionaries of the British Oriental Society for the Advancement of Education. Bible, literature, mathematics, sewing, and embroidering were given equal weight in her school (Wang, "Social" 87). Other missionaries followed her footsteps. By 1876, there were more than 2000 Chinese female students studying in 82 Day Schools and 39 Boarding Schools sponsored by missionaries (Du, "General" 270). The earliest theories on women's independence in China might be the lectures given by Kang Youwei around 1884 and later formulated in his book *The Book of Great Unity* [Datong Shu 大同书], in which he purported that women and men were born equal, and, therefore, the oppression of women was "sun renquan, qing tianmin, bei gongli, shi gongyi" 损人权，轻天民，悖公理，失公益" (damaging the human right, maltreating the natural gifts, subverting the heavenly law, and failing the public welfare) (146). He suggested that women's emancipation should be embodied in the right to receive education, to vote, and to become involved in public affairs, and it should also be embodied in the freedom of marriage and unbound feet. His theory was further popularized by Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong, Yan Fu and other early reformists, which constituted a favorable environment for the emergence of magazines, organizations, literatures, and educational institutions for women or owned by women in the early twentieth

century. Women's emancipation and participation in the public affairs were taken as the symbols of social progress and civilization during the enlightening movements, such as in the New Culture and May Fourth Movements, and women's social status was greatly improved in Mao's regime through the application of laws and policies enacting the freedom of marriage and divorce and equal pay for equal work. However, despite the political or humanistic advocacy for women's emancipation, right and equality, women were described either as the group of being ill treated or as the gender associated with being inferior, weak, ignorant, or evil in almost all the family saga novels analyzed in this dissertation – probably with Mo Yan's *Red Sorhgum* and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* as exceptions. This might result from the long standing traditional gender theories formulated by the earliest Confucian scholars, as well as embodied in popular literary works, and lasted until the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912. During all the imperial dynasties, Confucian gender norms and the patriarchal culture were officially taken as possessing a legally binding effect and ethically demanding obedience. In *Book of Odes* [Shi Jing 诗经], the earliest anthology of Chinese poetry, compiled in the sixth century B.C., the following lines were written:

A clever man builds a city

A clever woman lays one low;

With all her qualifications, that clever woman

Is but an ill-omened bird,

A woman with a long tongue

Is a flight of steps leading to calamities;

For disorder does not come from heaven

But is brought about by women.

Among those who can not be trained or taught

Are women and eunuchs.

- "Reverence" [Zhanyang 瞻仰], *Book of Odes*

Associated with evils and disasters, women were, from the very beginning in Chinese history, treated as the objects to "be trained [and] taught" and kept away from politics and social affairs. Besides the norms and regulations written by Confucian scholars, women themselves also wrote books to set up restrictions or codes for themselves, which were typified by the *Four Books for Women* [*Nü Si Shu* 女四书], an anthology of four different instruction books written by four learned women in four different historical periods. It was superimposed with notes and commentaries by the famous Confucian scholar Wang Xiang in the Ming Dynasty and published in 1624 by Duo Wen Tang Press. The *Four Books for Women* contained the "three obediences" for women - to the father before marriage, to the husband in marriage, and to the son in widowhood — and the "four virtues" for women — fidelity, propriety in speech, modest appearance, and proficiency in the needle work, and it reinforced the Confucian gender-based division of "nei" 内 (inner/domestic) and "wai" 外 (outer/social) in labor and the realm of activities respectively for women and men, which is, women should do

household work and cultivate a harmonious relationship among family members, while men should concentrate on social relationships and obtain official positions in the feudal bureaucratic system. These four books were Ban Zhao's *Admonitions for Women* [Nü Jie 女诫] written in the Han Dynasty, Song Ruoxin's *Analects for Women* [Nü Lunyu 女论语] written in the Tang Dynasty, Empress Xu's *Instructions for the Inner Quarters* [Nei Xun 内训] written in the Ming Dynasty, and Wang Xiang's mother's *A Concise Account of Basic Regulations for Women* [*Nü Fanjie Lu* 女范捷录] written in the Ming Dynasty. Although these instructions, norms, codes and obligations, which had lasted for thousands of years, had been officially abolished in the Republican *New Law*, their effects were still living in men's ideology and rationalized by the nation's backwardness in productivity and its dominant agrarian economy in the first half of the twentieth century and Mao's era. Growing up in a culture that had subordinated women for thousands of years, Mao Zedong and his peasant armies had spontaneously taken women as the other half, associated with doing domestic works and raising children besides taking part in revolutions and socialist constructions – as described in most of the sample novels. Furthermore, in Karl Marx's and Frederick Engels' books, which were usually taken as divine instructions by Mao Zedong and his Communist Party, women seemed to have never been regarded as men's equals - they were "slaves of the husbands" (52), as claimed in "The Holy Family" co-authored by Marx and Engels - though a universal suffrage and the

protection of female labors were proclaimed in *Communist Manifesto*. Besides all these reasons, another possible and immediate reason might be that all the family saga novels analyzed in this dissertation were written by men, which is one of the regrets of this research and will be further discussed in the last section of this chapter - "Limitations and Implications for Future Studies".

The discussion above shows that generalization drawn from fictions can be as troublesome as that drawn from sociological statistics – it is difficult to disentangle the facts from the fictional imaginations which were usually developed from facts, especially for the family saga novels published in the 1980s-1990s. This research also shows that the family saga novels published in the Republican period and Mao's era were also consciously or subconsciously oriented or appropriated by the authors' intention to reform society, to moralize the public, or to advocate Mao's ideologies – to, conclusively, write a history in accordance with the need of the dominant forces or for the cause of justice. Moreover, new terms were constantly coined and the same thing might be termed differently in different disciplines and in different historical periods. For example, the phenomenon of parents living close to their children or children's parents-in-law had been existing since marriages and mating behaviors came into being, and it was not until recently that a new term was coined to refer to these kinds of families in such biological, marital, and residential relationship as "modified extended families", which might produce another research topic – how far should this neighboring distance be to be counted as "modified extended families"? Or should there be any other measurements to define this concept rather than the

neighboring distance?

Taken as a whole, the family-related phenomena, such as the life cycle of the family and the composition and changes of the family, were usually studied by scholars in sociology or anthropology by means of statistics or documents. In this respect, the ideological, inter-personal, or affective aspects of the family life might be under-evaluated or failed to be reflected in the formulation or statistical reflection on the familial pattern or social pattern in sociology.

Whether this research has revealed anything that can be taken as reliable or indispensible to the study in sociology, it has at least provided an alternative approach to the understanding of human beings, society, and history; through the introduction of the historical background against which the family saga novels were written and through focusing on the processual information that had revealed how the author negotiated with society, the Chinese family saga novels had demonstrated their significance in the popularization of more scholarly views for a wider audience, and in the ideological message they transmitted rather than the realistic descriptions. In this way "the cultural capital concentrated in the idea of 'family' for personal, social, political, and economic objectives" was tapped (Creed 330), and the constructive function of literature in the understanding of history and society was realized in the way summarized by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht as follows when he discussed about the relationship between literature and history:

> …literary reception would be a factor in the stabilization, questioning, and

> evolution - in any case, in the qualitative change - of existing social structures. Such changes can only be effected indirectly, which suggests that the meanings fulfilled by readings of literary texts modify the field of the audience's social knowledge that is the basis of the everyday action. [...] Thus literature has an impact on history whenever its reception modifies the knowledge relevant for motivation, which in turn alters the social action of a sufficient number of readers so that this change becomes an incentive for a shift in social structures. (Gumbrecht 26).

Through a cross-sectional analysis of the family saga novels published in different historical periods over the span of the whole twentieth century, this research has obtained a longitudinal perspective on how the Chinese family saga novel as a literary genre had thematically and stylistically changed during the twentieth century as the result of the changes in social forms and literary aesthetics. The intention to take the Chinese family saga novels as an indispensible information source to fill up the gaps left by the "code-like sequence" or numerical data circulating in sociological studies turns out to be questionable, due to the observation that many acute social problems were not mentioned in many novels published in the 1980s-1990s when the authors purposefully avoided sensitive topics or chose to play literary games in an age filled with conflicting and plural ideologies and paradigms. In the same way, sociological statistics might be misleading in that they were subject to available techniques or purposeful falsifications. Therefore, literature and sociology might

be complementary to each other, but based on when and how. Literature is only a reconstruction of certain moments but never a coherent totality. The Chinese family saga novels in the twentieth century had somewhat helped reveal the process and tensions in which historical changes took place and certain aesthetics were formed, and sometimes they even played the function of shaping and constituting history, but mostly they proved to be an alternative approach to the understanding of history and society through anecdotes and "thick descriptions", which were the "missing information" in the official records or sociological studies. With "insights and pleasure" [Hart 93], they might have helped stimulate both the readers and writers to do more research into the questions such as those raised by the new historicist minds: "How are power, poverty, crime, the penal system, and war represented and discursively constituted at a certain place, at a certain time? How are sexuality, gender, identity, leisure and work, sickness, epidemics, and death depicted? How does the intertwining between mass culture and politics affect the political process" (Kaes 156)?

4.3 Limitations and Implications for Future Studies

This is not a sociological study or anything belonging to social sciences. No fieldwork or scientific approaches are claimed here for credibility or reliability as most of the researches in sociology do. This research mainly focused on a special type of literary works published in Mainland China during the twentieth century – the Chinese family saga novels. In a literary rather than documentary or statistical language, this research tried to provide an alternative approach to the study of the

family which was traditionally licensed to the sociological domain without the loss of the already verified literary signatures on how a narrative is thematically as well as stylistically organized and in what way the protagonists are portrayed.

Freedman and Skinner postulated in 1974 that "agnatic kinship is but one important axis along which Chinese society was organized; and to understand its significance it must be taken in its full social context. The study of all modes of grouping and alignment - not only lineage but also village, marketing community, hsiang, secret society, cult, and so on - will show us how complex was the political system within which agnatic kinship play a role" (Freedman and Skinner 346). Given the rural-urban gap, regional variations and the changes of social textures, it is impossible for this research to draw a comprehensive and fair picture of what the family was like and how society had changed temporally and spatially over the whole twentieth century - just based on the analysis of the content of a literary genre. Furthermore, many valuable saga novels were not included in this research; for example, the following family saga novels were highly evaluated by many literary critics and greatly cherished by me but failed to be analyzed in this dissertation: Huo Da's *The Funeral of Muslims*, which won the Mao Dun Literature Prize in 1991 and reflects the epic-like history of a Hui family in the Han dominated culture; Wang Anyi's *Reality and Fiction*, which overtly discusses the degeneration of the family saga novels as a literary genre and deals with a female writer's search for the meaning of writing and human existence, and Yu Hua's *To Live*, the winner of Italy's Premio Grinzane Cavour in 1998, which can be taken as a bitter smile and a persistent resistance against all

human evils and disasters through staying alive and forgiveness. Female writers' works were failed to be mentioned for whatever reason but not purposefully, which is a great regret - if gender discourses themselves were politics. In light of this, the selection of the sample novels and of the research method turns out to be subjective or arbitrary. The attempt to use the information provided in a type of literary genre to fulfill a social scientific intention seemed to be ambitious and sometimes subject to the pitfalls in both literary studies and sociological studies; and this shaky stand was further complicated by the socialized autonomy of the author who was an intelligent product of society and an independent biological ego, whose behavior and psychological approaches were affected by both immediate and chronic influences or external and internal needs.

Translation might be another problem. Many information sources, including fourteen family saga novels and a large number of critiques, were Chinese. To cite them in their original form might mean another book in thickness. I, the researcher and the author of this dissertation, therefore, assumed that I was competent enough to basically transmit the originally intended meanings; furthermore, if there should be serious damages to the originally intended meanings, her supervisors could have spotted them and corrections might have been suggested. By saying/doing so, I also apologize for the pressure I put on my supervisors. To present a logically and precisely written dissertation should have been the sole responsibility of the student.

Since nobody could rise above his or her own social formations that might have formulated his or her ideological orientations, I might never be able to re-

experience or decipher what had happened in the bygone ages or what had experienced or felt by the authors of the family saga novels barely through reading literary works and novels; it is even more adventurous and apt to be challenged to use fiction to fill in the gaps left by the "missing information' or "code-like sequence" in sociology. What this research has laboriously done is, at most, to provide a different or an alternative perspective into the already existing and constantly expanding taxonomy of the studies of the Chinese family, with all its domestic activities and interactions with society and individual persons during the whole twentieth century. It might be a contribution to the study of the family in sociology through providing "living scenes" and "processual data" or to the study of the family saga novels in literature through integrating statistics and documentary data into the analysis of literary works to testify their sociological function, but the reliability and credibility of this method needs more researches to verify or to enrich.

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